THE
FREAKS OF FORTUNE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

FREAKS OF FORTUNE;

OR,

MEMOIRS

OF

CAPTAIN CONYERS.

A NOVEL.

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FREAKS OF FORTUNE.

LET not the mind, which either age or nature has rendered callous to the misfortunes of mankind, ſeek for amuſement in the following pages; they are written but for thoſe who can feel for the diſtreſs of virtue; for innocence oppreſſed. Thoſe happy few, who know the exquiſite pleaſure to be derived from the tears of ſenſibility—tears which flow from ſentiment — the pureſt ſource of virtue!

Walking home late at night from a friend's houſe where I had ſupped,

a heavy ſhower of rain compelled me to take ſhelter in a narrow paſſage in the vicinity of Mary-le-bone. I had remained in this ſituation more than half an hour, and the rain ſtill continued to pour with encreaſing violence, when a woman appeared at the door near to which I had placed myſelf; but finding it impoſſible to go out, ſhe was preparing to return, when ſhe perceived me, and invited me into her houſe. Her appearance did not much diſpoſe me to accept her invitation, but as I had been extremely heated with walking, and now felt myſelf chill, I reluctantly conſented to follow her. My haggard conductreſs led me up ſtairs into a room, which from its length and breadth reſembled a gallery; and which the faint glimmering of a dying lamp but feebly reſcued from total obſcurity.

rity. I had remained here ſome time, and thought myſelf quite alone, when the ſound of a deep ſigh made me turn towards a kind of bed from whence it ſeemed to proceed ; I walked towards it, holding the lamp in one hand, and with the other drew aſide a piece of old curtain that concealed a bed of ſtraw. What was my ſurprize, when I perceived a young woman, who immediately ſtarted up, and threw herſelf at my feet! There was an air of dignity in her countenance, that did but as ill accord with her tattered garments, as the modeſty of her mein, with the place in which ſhe lay. I took hold of her hand to aſſiſt her in riſing; ſhe withdrew it haſtily, and exclaimed, ſtill remaining in the ſame poſture, " In the name of Heaven, Sir, if you are alive to pity, do not take an ungenerous

 advantage

advantage of the ſituation in which you find me; do not reduce an unfortunate woman to deſpair; for be aſſured, I will pierce myſelf to the heart, ſooner than conſent to be the partaker of infamy." Theſe laſt words were uttered with ſuch an impreſſive energy, as did not ſuffer me to doubt they were ſincere. She ſhed a torrent of tears as ſhe pronounced them: never did affliction add greater charms to beauty. "What barbarian," ſaid I, "could be inſenſible to the horrors of your ſituation? let me entreat you to riſe; your grief overpowers me; deign to inform me from what ſource it flows; it is not curioſity that prompts this requeſt, but an earneſt deſire of relieving you, if poſſible, from a ſituation that ſtrikes my ſoul with horror but to think of."

"It is indeed, moſt wretched," ſaid

ſaid the fair mourner, " and truly worthy your compaſſion: a mother at the point of death, and at this moment perhaps, expiring for want of aſſiſtance, unleſs I purchaſe it by my ſhame." She could not proceed. Her utterance was ſtopped by ſobbing; 'till a freſh ſhower of tears afforded her ſalutary relief. I had begun to weep ſympathy, when the woman who had introduced me to her apartment opened the door, and began with horrid oaths and imprecations to load her with abuſe. She bore it ſilently, but her looks moſt eloquently beſought my protection.

Having ſomewhat recovered myſelf, " By what right," ſaid I to the wretch, " and for what reaſon, do you dare to inſult this lady?" " For what, Sir! Let her pay me the two guineas I advanced her, and without

which, ſhe and her mother would have been ſtarved to death long ſince; let her pay me what ſhe owes me, and ſhe may go the devil with her —modeſty," ſaid the hag, in accompanying the laſt word with an epithet that had ſeldom been beſtowed on that virtue before.

" Is what this woman ſays, true?" ſaid I, turning to the young perſon, who was covered with confuſion at the indecency of the old harridan's expreſſions. " Yes Sir," ſaid ſhe, without daring to lift up her eyes; " 'tis true that ſhe has advanced me this ſum at different times, and that my mother muſt have expired for want, but for her aſſiſtance; but ſhe wiſhes me to repay this kindneſs by the ſacrifice of my honour," ſaid ſhe, ſobbing.

" There," ſaid I to the woman, " take

" take this," giving her three guineas, " and let me beg of you to give the lady no further trouble." " I, Sir!" replied ſhe, " Miſs Charlotte knows very well that I always behaved to her with kindneſs, and treated her as if ſhe had been my own child; I don't ſay it by way of reproaching her with it, but as long as I had a ſhilling, I partook it with her, as one ought to do indeed, with a perſon one has known ſo long." " And *ſerved* ſo long," ſaid Charlotte, who was more mortified at the familiarity of the woman's language, than at her abuſe. " Very well, Miſs," ſaid the old jury, " what if I was your *ſervant*; that's not ſo much for you to boaſt of, and you'd probably be very happy yourſelf to—." " Hold your impertinent tongue," ſaid I, interrupting her, " and begone this inſtant." As I had

paid her for obedience, ſhe obeyed; and made her reſentment give way to her intereſt.

" You ſee, Sir," ſaid Charlotte, " to what a ſtate of humiliation I am reduced; ſuffer me to leave this infamous place, which cannot but augment it every moment; let me go to my mother, and acquaint her with the eternal obligation you have impoſed on us both."

I begged Charlotte to accept my purſe, in which there were ſome guineas remaining. The diſtreſs ſhe was involved in, and the ſervice I had juſt rendered her, made it impoſſible to refuſe my requeſt. I would fain have ſpared her the humiliating action of extending her hand to receive it; but her ſituation required too ſpeedy relief, to admit of thoſe punctilios which delicacy employs on occaſions leſs

leſs urgent. All I could do, was to abridge her expreſſions of gratitude, which, mingled with confuſion, ſhewed the violent agitation of her mind. I preſſed her hand with that air of friendſhip, which tending to remove the embaraſſment naturally occaſioned by the reception of favours, and entreated her not to diminiſh the pleaſure I experienced in being able to afford her aſſiſtance, however trifling, by effuſions of gratitude that could not but diſtreſs me. " Be not aſhamed of your ſituation; misfortune detracts not from merit: on the contrary, it gives an additional luſtre to virtue."

I prepared to leave her, when ſhe took me by the hand and exclaimed, " No, Sir, however wretched and humiliating the ſtate of miſery into which we are plunged, you have

convinced me it ought not to raiſe a bluſh on the cheek of Virtue. You ſhall come with me, and judge yourſelf of the ſervice you render us, by a ſight of our ſituation: you will not refuſe me the ſatisfaction of ſhewing my poor mother our generous benefactor!" After ſome reſiſtance, I yielded to her entreaties, and was on the point of following her, when it occurred to me, that my viſit, and the explanations of Charlotte, might have ſo powerful an effect on her mother, in the ſtate ſhe was then in, as to prove fatal. I mentioned this to her; ſhe was of the ſame opinion, and ſuffered me to depart, after exacting a promiſe that I would call the next morning. I aſk-her where ſhe might be found; " In the garret of this very houſe," ſaid ſhe, ſighing. " Do not break your word; and remember, however im-

portant the ſervices you have rendered me, they will loſe their value, ſhould you neglect to come and reap the fruits of them." She ſaid this in a tone ſo affecting, that it ſtruck to my heart.

By this time it was very late; I got home, but to retire into myſelf; my eyes were not cloſed thro' the whole night. The anxiety that agitated me, was of a different nature to that which is generally excited by mere compaſſion for the unfortunate.

My mind was a prey to continual alarms; I feared that my aſſiſtance had arrived too late; and dreaded to find Charlotte, in the morning, occupied in paying the laſt ſad duties to her mother. This idea afflicted me beyond expreſſion, and I offered up my prayers for the preſervation of life, with the utmoſt fervency of devotion.

As ſoon as it was light, I aroſe, and went immediately to Charlotte's.

Early as it was, ſhe had been out ſeveral times in ſearch of nouriſhment for her mother; but no ſhop being open, ſhe had not been able to procure any thing. The ſight of me, appeared to cauſe her as much ſurprize as joy; to find me at her door, when ſhe thought me locked in the arms of ſleep; the tender anxiety I expreſſed at her mother's ſituation, and my eager impatience to ſee her—all this announced ſomething more than the mere feelings of common compaſſion. At length ſhe led me to the garret. However ſtrong the idea I had formed, during the night, of the indigence I was to witneſs, the picture of miſery that now preſented itſelf to my ſight, made me ſtart back with horror. A woman, on whoſe countenance was

painted

painted every ſymptom of death, extended on a bundle of ſtraw in the corner of the room, without any other covering than her tattered garments; and whoſe ſole nouriſhment, for ſeveral days, had been a dry cruſt, with a little water that ſtood in a broken pitcher by her ſide, ſeemed to wait with patient reſignation for a relief from all her miſeries. "Here," ſaid Charlotte, ſhewing me to her mother, "here is our deliverer!" She made an attempt to lift up her head, but her extreme weakneſs rendered it impoſſible. She could only mutter a few inarticulate ſounds.

I aſked Charlotte, if ſhe had not been able to procure her any nouriſhment the preceeding night. "Alas! Sir," ſaid ſhe, "judge with what unceaſing cruelty fortune perſecutes us. It was ſo late when you left

me, that after running over the whole neighbourhood, I could only procure a little milk. As I had neither fire nor fuel, I endeavoured to warm it as well as I could over the feeble flame of the lamp; and was about to give it to my mother, when the lamp was extinguiſhed for want of oil; my mother, who had juſt hold of the baſon, not having ſtrength to ſupport it, let it fall into the ſtraw, and had not a ſingle drop left to moiſten her lips."

The obſtinacy with which fate ſeemed to perſecute theſe children of misfortune, even in the moſt trivial circumſtances, rendered them more dear to me, and I reſolved at all events to overcome the malice of their deſtiny.

I had taken the precaution to put a bottle of wine in my pocket, and adminiſtered a few ſpoonfuls of it to this

this unfortunate woman. While Charlotte was preparing her ſome food, I went to my phyſician, and brought him back with me. He was as much ſtricken as myſelf at the ſight of ſuch complicated miſery. Having felt her pulſe, he told me that time and care would certainly reſtore her to health, but that the utmoſt caution was neceſſary. The firſt ſtep to be taken, was to remove her to a comfortable apartment, for the wind blew into the garret in which ſhe lay from all quarters, and the leaſt hole in it was that which had been made to ſerve as a window.

As it was impoſſible in her weak ſtate to remove her far, I determined to go to the wretch to whom I had ſpoken the evening before, and hire her apartment; but ſhe informed me, that ſhe was herſelf a lodger, and that there

there were other rooms then vacant in the houſe. I therefore immediately went to the landlady, and hired a room on the firſt floor, in which was a decent bed; whither we cauſed the old lady to be conveyed the inſtant it was ready to receive her.

When this was done, I experienced that kind of ſatisfaction which naturally reſults from the commiſſion of a good action; a feeling wiſely imparted to us by Providence for the beſt of purpoſes—to excite us to deeds of virtue. I paſſed the whole morning with theſe unfortunate women. Buſineſs of importance required my attendance at noon, and I returned to them early in the evening; and continued this cloſe attention for ſeveral days. Notwithſtanding the air of eaſe and friendſhip that always accompanied the little preſents I made

to Charlotte, ſhe could not receive them without evident confuſion, which proceeded more from gratitude than vanity. Although her embaraſſments, ſpringing from ſo amiable a cauſe, did not diſpleaſe me, yet I reſolved to ſpare it her in future, by giving at once a ſum ſufficient to furniſh them with ſubſiſtence for ſeveral months. This did but augment her confuſion, and ſhe was even on the point of refuſing it. "Your extreme delicacy," ſaid I to her, "afflicts me. Are we not friends? were our ſituations reverſed, would you not act as I do now? and can you ſuppoſe that I would refuſe to be indebted to you for aſſiſtance? No;—believe me, none but little minds, incapable of conferring, can dread the weight of an obligation. The gift that proceeds from the heart,

can

can never diſhonour the heart that receives it."

Charlotte's mother recovered her ſtrength apace, owing to the great care and aſſiduity of the phyſician, and to the extreme attention of her daughter. The marks of their gratitude likewiſe encreaſed daily. It was not by vague expreſſions, which are alike common to the feeling and ungrateful; it was by a thouſand little attentions, involuntary effuſions of the heart, as ſincere as affecting, that they marked the feelings of their minds. They had never, however, explained to me the cauſe of their diſtreſſed ſituation. It was impoſſible that two perſons, whoſe indigence ſeemed ſo little to accord with that air of diſtinction viſible in all their actions, ſhould not have experienced the greateſt misfortunes. It aſtoniſhed

niſhed me, conſidering the confidence that had already been placed in my breaſt, and the deſire ſo natural to the unfortunate, of ſoothing their griefs by relating them, that they had ſo long obſerved a ſilence, which began to appear culpable. However ſincere my attachment, however great the reſpect Charlotte's conduct had inſpired me with, I could not help encouraging, at times, reflections which ſullied the pleaſure their preſence lighted up. The place in which I had firſt diſcovered her, tended to augment my ſuſpicions; to ſatisfy them, was my determined reſolution; for I was anxious to confer my eſteem on the object from whom I had not been able to withhold my love. I addreſſed myſelf for this purpoſe to the landlady of the houſe; this woman had, on ſeveral occaſions,

evinced

evinced ſentiments one ſhould have little expected to find in a perſon in her ſituation; and the immediate diſmiſſion of the wretch who had introduced me to Charlotte, as ſoon as I had acquainted her with her true character, had tended to confirm my good opinion of her tenderneſs.

To pay her the rent of the apartment, which was juſt due, was the pretext for my viſit. I had no great difficulty in bringing on the converſation; and at the firſt queſtion put to her, ſhe informed me that the two ladies had lodged at her houſe about ten months; that at firſt, they had occupied the ſame apartment I had hired for them; that they had paſſed ſome time in ſearch of a gentleman, they had not been able to diſcover; that their conduct had ever been truly exemplary and edifying;

but

but that an unforeſeen accident having deprived them of the power to pay for their apartment, and relying herſelf, in a great meaſure, for ſubſiſtence on the money ſhe received for lodgings, ſhe had been compelled, however reluctantly, to give them warning; but ſeeing the trouble and diſtreſs to which they were reduced, ſhe had ſuffered them to live gratis in the garret in which I had found them.

I aſked her if there would be any impropriety in informing me what that accident was, which reduced them to ſuch a ſtate of wretchedneſs. "What!" ſaid ſhe, teſtifying the greateſt ſurprize, "Is it poſſible they ſhould not have mentioned it to you?" "Indeed, they have not," replied I; beginning to dread that ſhe would

acquaint

acquaint me with circumſtances I had not dared to anticipate.

" Indeed, Sir;" ſhe reſumed, " I cannot conceive the motives of a diſcretion ſo truly miſplaced; for there is not any thing in the adventure that does not redound to their honour."

This beginning gave me ſpirits, by baniſhing my ſuſpicions.

" Mrs. Bellmour, and Miſs Charlotte, her daughter, in coming to town by the Exeter diligence, made acquaintance with a ſpecies of fortune hunter, who called himſelf Sir John Parſons. He had aſked their permiſſion to call on them in town, with ſuch an air of reſpect and politeneſs, as made them not ſcruple to allow it. He took ſuch advantage of their compliance with his requeſt, that he ſoon began to viſit them daily; profeſſing ſo great an attachment, and zeal for

their

their ſervice, that he ſpeedily gained their entire confidence; and preſuming on his knowledge of their circumſtances, he had the infamy to make diſhonourable propoſals for old Lord H. who, he ſaid, was diſtractedly fond of Miſs Charlotte; he added, that his anxious concern for their intereſt, had induced him to overcome his delicacy, which could not but receive a ſhock on ſuch an occaſion; he did not doubt but they would give him due credit for ſuch a ſacrifice of his feelings; and continuing to diſplay all the advantages that might be drawn from ſuch a connection, he preſſed them very much to empower him to give a favourable anſwer to the peer.

" This diſcourſe, which had at firſt covered Charlotte with bluſhes, made her burſt into a flood of tears. Her mother,

mother, whoſe ſurprize, while he was ſpeaking, had been ſo great as to deprive her of the power of utterance, as ſoon as ſhe recovered herſelf ſufficiently, gave vent to her indignation. Knowing the ſtate of their affairs, he had little expected to meet with ſuch repugnance to a propoſition, which ſo many thouſands in a ſimilar ſituation would have accepted with joy. He was doubtleſs ſorry for having ſo far diſcovered himſelf, and mortified at the failure of his embaſſy; but concealing his diſappointment, the better to execute his projects, he expreſſed the ſincereſt regret for having ſuffered himſelf to be prevailed on to convey a propoſal that was calculated to incur their diſpleaſure, praiſed their conduct in the higheſt ſtrains of eulogy, and endeavoured to palliate his own, by

ſaying

ſaying, that his zeal for their intereſt, had conquered his diſcretion. Lord H. informed of their refuſal, made application to me, to deliver to them ſeveral preſents; which, ignorant of his intentions, I made no ſcruple to undertake; but they were all rejected with ſcorn. This reſiſtance, which he had probably ſeldom experienced, only ſerved to irritate his deſires; he determined to call on them himſelf, hoping that the ſplendour of his dreſs and equipage might impoſe on the one, and ſeduce the other; but he had the mortification to find himſelf as ill received as his preſents. Mrs. Bellmour did not ſuffer her indignation ſo far to conquer her prudence, as to loſe ſight of the reſpect ſhe owed to herſelf; but her cenſure was not leſs ſevere for being coolly delivered; and Lord H. muſt have been

ſenſibly aſhamed of his infamous conduct, was it poſſible to raiſe a bluſh on the cheek of a *man of the world.* From ſome expreſſions that fell from him as he deſcended the ſtair-caſe, I found his vanity alone had ſuffered.

" Sir John, finding his ſchemes fruſtrated in the firſt inſtance, ſoon reſolved on others which ſucceeded but too well. In a few days after the viſit of Lord H. two ill-looking men knocked at the door, and aſked for Mrs. Bellmour and her daughter. It was ſomewhat early in the morning, and the ladies were not up, I therefore begged they would call again; but inſtead of complying with my requeſt, they ruſhed up ſtairs and burſt open their chamber door. The ladies ſhrieked violently, and I immediately ran to their aſſiſtance, when I ſaw the men preſent two ſlips of parchment,

parchment, which they called writs, the one for Mrs. Bellmour, the other for Miſs Charlotte; the firſt for the ſum of two thouſand pounds, the laſt for ſixteen hundred, at the ſuit of a Mr. Freeman. They aſſured the men that they muſt be miſtaken; that they knew not ſuch a perſon as Mr. Freeman; and that they did not owe five ſhillings in the world. The men replied, all that might be very true, but it was no buſineſs of theirs; they muſt do their duty; and told them to get up immediately, for that they had other buſineſs to do, and could not ſtay dancing attendance on them. I endeavoured to prevail on them to ſtop till I had ſpoken to my attorney; but in vain; they were inexorable, and even refuſed to leave the room while the ladies dreſſed themſelves, ſwearing they would not loſe ſight of

their priſoners a moment, for that the ſum was too large to think of running any riſks. So that I was obliged to draw the curtains, and they were under the neceſſity of dreſſing themſelves on the bed. The bailiffs then hurried them away to a ſpunging-houſe. I thought poor Miſs Charlotte would have died from the fright; her mother was compelled to conceal her own fears, that ſhe might quiet thoſe of her daughter. After remaining the whole day and ſucceeding night in a ſort of tap-room, with ſeveral drunken reprobates, where they were expoſed to witneſs the moſt indecent diſcourſe of wretches, who ſought to gain a temporary relief from their cares, by abandoning themſelves to the moſt beaſtly intoxication, they were conveyed to the King's Bench priſon; for I had been with my attor-

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ney immediately after they had been taken from my houſe, and he had told me that nothing could be done, except they could find ſufficient bail, which he apprehended from the large of the ſum, would be extremely difficult. And he adviſed them by all means to get conveyed to priſon, as they would be much more comfortable there, than in a ſpunging-houſe, where they would be ſubjected to every ſpecies of inſult and extortion. In the afternoon of the day on which they were arreſted, Sir John Parſons called at my houſe, and appeared extremely ſhocked when I told him of what had happened. He ſaid, he would go to them immediately, and ſee what could be done for their relief. He accordingly went, and expreſſed the greateſt concern at their ſituation, requeſting they would make them-

ſelves eaſy, for that he aſſured them he would not reſt 'till they were releaſed. Two days after they had been conveyed to priſon, Sir John came to the houſe, and delivered me a note from Mrs. Bellmour, to inform me that Sir John would pay me what was due for rent, and producing the key of their bureau, he went to their apartment, and took away what money there was, with ſome trinkets, and all their other effects, having firſt paid me the trifle that was due to me. Some days after this Mrs. Bellmour wrote to requeſt me to call on her at the priſon. I accordingly went; and you may gueſs my aſtoniſhment, when ſhe informed me that ſhe had loſt the key of her bureau, and begged I would cauſe it to be broken open, and bring her the effects it contained. An explanation

ſucceeded,

ſucceeded, when when I found that Sir John had forged the note he ſhewed to me, and had by ſome means obtained poſſeſſion of the key. This diſcovery affected them deeply, tho' they were anxious to conceal the diſtreſs it occaſioned. I thought to hear of Sir John by calling on Lord H. and went to his houſe for that purpoſe, but received from his Lordſhip this laconic anſwer, "that the man was an impoſtor and a ſcoundrel; and he knew not what was become of him." I then ventured mention to his Lordſhip the ſituation to which they were reduced, and to expreſs a hope that his Lordſhip would aſſiſt in releaſing from ſuch a ſtate, two perſons for whom he had profeſſed an eſteem and attachment. He ſtopped me ſhort, by ſaying, "They know very well the offers I made them; let them

liſten to my terms and I will extricate them from their difficulties; but if their ridiculous ſcruples overcome their prudence, I ſhall employ my money to ſimilar purpoſes elſewhere." I dared not expreſs what I felt, ſo left him without a reply. In ſhort, Sir, they remained in priſon ſeveral months; for they were arreſted at the beginning of what the lawyers call the *long vacation*, and as the writ was not returnable till the beginning of November, they could not plead to it before. The action not being purſued, they were releaſed of courſe; but where were they to ſeek redreſs for their ſufferings; how revenge themſelves for their long deprivation of liberty; how get reimburſed the fees and other numerous expences their arreſt and impriſonment had neceſſarily incurred? The plaintiff, Mr. Freeman,

Freeman, was not to be found. Indeed, they have ſince diſcovered, that Freeman was a fictitious name aſſumed for the purpoſe, by that infamous wretch, the pretended Baronet, who had taken a falſe oath to a debt that had never exiſted, in order to execute that ſcheme he had previouſly premeditated, and afterwards accompliſhed with too much ſucceſs. When they left the priſon, they returned to my houſe, and for a ſhort time occupied their old apartment; but as I told you before, Sir, having little beſides my lodgings to depend on, and they being totally unable to pay for them, I was under the diſagreeable neceſſity of giving them warning. They have lived in the garret in which you found them ever ſince; 'tis now about three months: during that time, they have experienced all the

horrors of indigence, which they preferred to affluence, when gained by infamy; for Lord H. knowing their ſituation, did not fail to repeat his abominable offers, which were rejected with the ſcorn they merited. Their education, which appears to me to have been diſtinguiſhed, has been more ornamental than uſeful; ſo that they were unable to repair the injuries of fortune, by exertions of induſtry. To crown their misfortunes, want and uneaſineſs of mind, reduced Mrs. Bellmour about ſix weeks ago to a ſick bed, where ſhe has remained ever ſince in the ſituation you found her."

All-wiſe Providence! exclaimed I, lifting my eyes towards Heaven, the rewards thou haſt deſtined for virtue, muſt be great indeed, ſince its ſuffer-

ings on earth are ſo ſevere; how elſe could we explain thy juſtice!

The recital of the landlady had affected me moſt ſenſibly; it had inſpired me with feelings of tenderneſs and benevolence, which extended even to herſelf: although ſhe had not rendered any eſſential ſervice to Charlotte, I excuſed her on account of her ſituation, and took a pleaſure in perſuading myſelf, that ſhe would have been more liberal, if it had been more in her power; ſhe had juſt diſſipated my fears, ſhe had beſtowed ſo many praiſes on Charlotte, ſhe had enabled me to confer my *eſteem* on the object of my love, ſhe had afforded me the means of juſtifying my paſſion; in return for ſuch ineſtimable favours, how could I refuſe her my friendſhip!

Theſe different ſentiments were

not thoroughly developed in my heart, but their effect was not leſs powerful, and I moſt eagerly embraced the good lady to whom I was under ſo many obligations. Returning to Charlotte, with more true joy and ſatisfaction than I had ever before experienced, I found her more handſome than uſual; the ſound of her voice made a deeper impreſſion on my heart; her mother became dearer to me; it was not that I loved her better—but my ſentiments, cleared from the miſt that had ſurrounded them, beamed in brighter luſtre, and ſhed their ſerene influence over my whole frame. I ſoon imparted it to my Charlotte, for our ſouls were congenial.

As I had now no reaſon to be aſhamed of my paſſion, I yielded to it without reſerve, and paid conſtant

attendance

attendance on Mrs. Bellmour and her daughter. I was never eaſy when abſent from them, and in their preſence forgot the world. My accuſtomed places of reſort grew irkſome; my friends did not fail to reproach me, for my ſecret was not entruſted with a ſingle ſoul, not even when I thought my conduct was only ſwayed by compaſſion. A man of honour ſhould be more ſtudious to conceal his benefactions, than a libertine to proclaim his debauches. My continual abſence from home, at length excited the attention of my father, who aſked me the cauſe of it. I gave him a vague anſwer, by no means calculated to ſatisfy him, and turned the converſation immediately.

I might have eluded his reproaches, but could not have borne his complaints; he loved me tenderly, nor

was

was my affection for him leſs fervent —it could only be equalled by my gratitude and reſpect. This was the firſt ſecret I had ever had for him, and I was anxious to diſcloſe it; but how? Great as was his indulgence for me, how could I hope to make him approve my paſſion? How could I convince him of the merit and virtue of a girl I had met with in ſo ſtrange a manner and ſo ſtrange a place? How overcome the obſtacles which ſuch a circumſtance muſt infallibly raiſe in the mind of a father? The explanations themſelves wore an appearance of adventure, far from proper to inſpire him with that confidence my recital ſtood ſo much in need of. Nay, what knowledge even had I, myſelf, of their affairs or family? I was well aware of the difficulties I had to ſurmount, but they were

were not capable of deterring me from purſuing my project. I reſolved to employ every art to make it ſucceed, and had no doubt, but could Charlotte be introduced to my father, and he have an opportunity of knowing her, her perſon would make ſuch a favourable impreſſion, as her ſentiments would not fail to confirm and improve. To put this project in execution, I took the following means.

My father had a ſiſter-in-law, who had lived in the houſe with us ever ſince the death of my mother, for whom he had the greateſt eſteem, which ſhe returned moſt cordially; my aunt's affection for me was extreme, and bordered even upon weakneſs. I now determined to take advantage of it, in order to gain her approbation of my love for Charlotte, and to make her ſecond my deſigns.

In

In this there was leſs difficulty, even than I imagined. When I painted to her the object of my affections in thoſe animated colours which are only known to the pencil of love, her cheek was fluſhed with the glow of applauſe, and my Charlotte ſoon became as dear to her as to myſelf. This charming girl had the moſt ſeducing countenance; an air of extreme modeſty; a melting brilliancy of eye, ſoftened by ſorrow into an expreſſive languor, and an affecting tone of voice, that conſpired to render thoſe impreſſions laſting, which ſhe never failed to inſpire at firſt ſight. Perſuaſion flowed from her lips, and the charms of her converſation ſoon completed that ſeduction the graces of her perſon had commenced. Having obtained the conſent of Charlotte, my aunt propoſed

to

to preſent her to my father, as the daughter of an intimate friend, who reſided in Yorkſhire, and had requeſted my aunt to take charge of her for a ſhort time till her affairs would permit her to come to London herſelf. We had not entertained a doubt, but that my father would be pleaſed with Charlotte the inſtant he knew her; nor were we deceived in our expectations. She made the deepeſt impreſſion on him; my aunt, as well as myſelf, ſoon perceived it, and ſhe did not fail to give him ſome of thoſe broad jocular hints which can ſcarcely be termed equivocal; my father confeſſed, that the ſtriking reſemblance ſhe bore to a perſon for whom he had poſſeſſed the greateſt affection, had excited the ſurprize he had expreſſed, and thrown him into an aſtoniſhment from which he could ſcarcely recover himſelf.

This

This circumſtance ſeemed to promiſe a happy iſſue to our projects, and inſpired us with the moſt flattering hopes. We determined however not to riſk any thing by raſh precipitation, but to wait patiently, till time, and a further acquaintance, ſhould have confirmed my father in his good opinion. Alas! the impreſſions ſhe excited were ever too deep to require the aſſiſtance of time to ſtrengthen or confirm them. My father had experienced the full effect of her charms, and had reſolved to make her his wife. His affection for me, induced him to combat this reſolution for ſome time; but as he was very rich, he thought he could reconcile my intereſt with that of his own heart; he would not however proceed without conſulting me; he ſent for me one morning to his ſtudy, and having

having exacted a promiſe that I would anſwer him with ſincerity and without the leaſt deference to his opinion, he aſked me what I thought of Charlotte Bellmour. I anſwered, that ſhe appeared to me a moſt lovely girl, and not leſs accompliſhed than beautiful. "You think then," ſaid he, "that ſhe is calculated to make the man happy, on whom ſhe beſtowed her affections." "Moſt certainly;" replied I, with vivacity, "I am even ſure of her ſentiments on that ſubject; they are congenial with my own; and I ſhould think that day the happieſt of my life, on which I ſaw them realized." "I am delighted," ſaid my father, "that your ſentiments and thoſe of Charlotte's, ſo perfectly coincide with my own. Your opinion charms me, and would encreaſe my affection for you, were it ſuſceptible

of

of augmentation; beſides the fortune I had with your mother, I give up to you from this moment my eſtate in Berkſhire, and enſure you the reverſion of all I poſſeſs, after my death, with the exception of three hundred per year, which I mean to reſerve as as a jointure for Charlotte, to whom I will immediately go and offer my hand." Heavens! what a ſtroke! At the very inſtant I thought my utmoſt hopes on the point of being accompliſhed, to ſee them totally daſhed from me, was more than I could bear. I had riſen from my chair to throw myſelf at the feet of my father, to give vent to thoſe ſentiments of gratitude his generoſity had inſpired me with; he had extended his arms to receive me. This ſtroke, as dreadful as unforeſeen, deprived me of all powers of utterance or motion. I

remained

remained like a ſtatue, but overcome at laſt by a conflict of oppoſing paſſions, fell ſenſeleſs on the floor. My father rang the bell, when the ſervant came up and conveyed me to my bed, where I remained ſome time without recovering my ſenſes. Charlotte was at my bed-ſide; the agony in her countenance too forcibly betrayed the ſtate of her heart. I now began to reflect on my ſituation, and felt that my exiſtence would be equally a burthen to me, whether I was deprived of Charlotte, or by obtaining her, empoiſoned the days of a father deſervedly dear to me. The influence theſe reflections had on my health, cauſed ſo ſenſible an alteration, that I had every reaſon to believe death would ſoon put an end to my ſufferings—A happineſs moſt ardently prayed for. My father, who had

interpreted

interpreted my anſwer as expreſſive of my approbation of his ſentiments, had no idea that my illneſs had been cauſed by the reſolution he had imparted; a reſolution he had not made known to my aunt, leſt it ſhould occaſion her any uneaſineſs, from a ſuppoſition of my intereſt being affected by it; her extreme affection to me was viſible in every action. He therefore reſolved not to acquaint her with his intentions, till matters were ſo far advanced, that no ſolicitations could make him deſiſt from putting his deſigns into execution.

I had begged every body to leave my room under a pretence of being deſirous of compoſing myſelf to ſleep, but in fact, finally to decide what ſteps ſhould be purſued. The ſcheme fixed on was worthy my heart. Thoſe reſolutions which are founded on ge-

nerous

nerous ſentiments, eſſentially differ from ſuch as ſpring from other motives: The more we reflect on them, the more we become attached. The pureſt ſatisfaction reſults from a due inveſtigation of them, and we enjoy by anticipation the rewards they deſerve, and never fail to obtain.

I ſent to requeſt Charlotte to come to my room. I had begged her to come alone, but I ſaw her enter accompanied by my father and the family phyſician, who had been ſent for to attend me. Having felt my pulſe, he declared that I was in the greateſt danger; that I was a prey to ſome ſecret and violent affliction; that the agitation of my mind had ſtrongly affected my nerves; and that the firſt ſtep to be taken, was to remove the cauſe of my anxiety; without which, all the aid of medicine would be fruitleſs

leſs and ineffectual; having ſaid this, he retired, declaring that he could not afford me the leaſt aſſiſtance in the ſtate I then was in. As ſoon as he had left me, I begged my father to retire, and leave me an inſtant with Charlotte.

When we were alone, I preſſed her hand with the little ſtrength that miſery had left me, and ſaid to her, " In name of all that is dear to you in the world, promiſe me, my deareſt Charlotte, to grant me the favour I am about to aſk; it is the only thing that can caſt the leaſt glimmering of comfort over the few days I have to live." She burſt into tears, and promiſed to comply with whatever I ſhould requeſt of her. I collected my whole ſtrength to impart with an *apparent* tranquillity, at leaſt, the ſacrifice I was about to require.

" My

" My father loves you, my beau-
" tiful Charlotte; alas! who can ſee,
" and not adore you! As there is now
" no hopes of your being mine, pro-
" miſe me to be his; let me die with
" the pleaſing conſolation of knowing
" him happy:—do not refuſe to ren-
" der him ſo—he will, I am ſure, for-
" get nothing that can contribute to
" your happineſs. It ſhall be my laſt
" requeſt to the Almighty to render
" it perfect—a requeſt I will urge
" with all the ardour ſuch an idea
" is capable of inſpiring me with.
" The laſt prayers of a ſincere heart
" will not be rejected. But, retire,
" my Charlotte; your preſence affects
" me too ſenſibly—I feel myſelf faint
" —let me diſpoſe of the few inſtants
" that remain to me." In fact, the ef-
forts this converſation had coſt me,
totally exhauſted my ſtrength, and

fetching a deep ſigh, I ſunk into a ſtate of perfect inſenſibility. Charlotte believed me dead; and ſhrieking violently, brought my father into the room with the phyſician, who had not yet left the houſe. By his exertions I ſpeedily recovered from my fainting fit—but ſoon fell into another, and continued the whole day hovering, as it were, between life and death. In a ſhort time, however, my youth, or the natural ſtrength of a conſtitution which had never been impaired by exceſs, overcame my diſorder. But I remained in ſuch a weak ſtate, that my life was ſtill in imminent danger—it hung by a thread, which the leaſt effort would have broken. I had been three days on the borders of the grave, and on the point of ſinking into it, when I fell into a deep ſleep, and did not awake for eight

and

forty hours. The phyſician and apothecary, who had remained alternately at the bed-ſide the whole time, gave my father great hopes, by aſſuring him that my pulſe gained additional force every hour, and that this criſis of Nature was the only thing that could reſtore me to health. When I awoke, my pains, my griefs had all vaniſhed; every object appeared new to me; I was like a ſtatue juſt animated. In ſhort, the affectionate attention of my father, the careſſes of my aunt, and the looks of Charlotte, reſtored its uſual pulſation to my heart, and I recovered daily.

When my health was entirely reeſtabliſhed, my father addreſſed me as follows: "What juſt ſubject for "complaint, my ſon, have you af-"forded me! It ſeems then I am no "longer your friend! You have ſe-

" crets I am not worthy to be en-
" truſted with! In me you acknow-
" ledge only the authority of a ty-
" rant, and no longer diſcover the
" tenderneſs of a father. Ah! George!
" have I merited this injuſtice?"

Such tender complaints pierced my very ſoul; I threw myſelf at the feet of my father, to implore his pardon for my ſilence. " Does not the tone " of my reproaches, ſaid he, preſſing " me in his arms, convince you, that " I have already pardoned you? Let " our preſent thoughts be only em-" ployed on the means of inſuring " your happineſs. For that end alone, " my ſon, ſhould the authority of a " parent be exerted.

" Good heavens, exclaimed I, a " paternal heart is the *chef d'œuvre* " of Nature!—If mine cannot attain " to ſuch an exceſs of tenderneſs, it

ſhall

" ſhall not be excelled in generoſity:
" no, my father, I will not accept the
" ſacrifice you offer me—Do you think
" it poſſible to complete my happineſs
" at the expence of your's? What
" monſter could conſent to empoiſon
" the days of him to whom he owes
" his exiſtence!" My aunt could not reſtrain her tears at this affecting ſcene.—Charlotte remained motionleſs from a variety of ſenſations, among which ſurprize was predominant. " Adorable Charlotte!" ſaid I, preſſing her hand between mine, " exert the power of your charms, " far more ſeducing than my voice, to " ſecure a heart that ſeeks to eſcape " you in ſpite of itſelf; the tender " name of mother, far from diminiſhing our mutual love, will only tend " to purify and perfect it; all of us " united for ever by the ſtrong ties

of duty and affection, our felicity "will be unſullied; it will be inca-" pable of diminution; it will ſmooth " the rugged path of life. O, my fa-" ther! why reſiſt our entreaties; if " the voices of Love and Nature are " incapable of moving you to com-" pliance, what powers can I invoke " to my aſſiſtance?"

All this time I remained on my knees between my father and Charlotte, laying hold of each of their hands to unite them. My father was ſilent, but looked at me with a kind of admiration, which I conſtrued into anxious indetermination, and endeavoured to overcome every ſcruple, by all the ardour of eloquence my feelings inſpired me with. "Oh, George!" ſaid he, at laſt, burſting into tears of tenderneſs, and preſſing me affectionately in his arms, "how ex-" quiſite

" quiſite is the pleaſure of poſſeſſing
" a ſon like you! How flattering the
" idea of having given exiſtence to a
" heart like thine! I would doubtleſs
" yield to your kind entreaties, but
" that the ſilence of the amiable
" Charlotte ſufficiently proves her
" wiſhes co-incide not with your's in
" the offered ſacrifice. Her happineſs
" is my neareſt concern, and who ſo
" capable of promoting it as yourſelf;
" why then do you refuſe it? Had I
" a gift more precious to offer, ſhould
" I heſitate? but I know no heart ſo
" worthy her acceptance as your own.
" Are you not of my opinion, lovely
" Charlotte? The offer of all I poſſeſs
" cannot add to the value of the gift
" I now make you;—ſay, Charlotte,
" can you reject it?"

Charlotte anſwered with her accuſtomed modeſty, " that whatever

" might be the inclination of her heart,
" ſhe could not diſpoſe of her hand
" without her mother's conſent."—
" And when will ſhe come," ſaid my father, with impatience;—" why is
" ſhe not here?" " She will be here
" very ſhortly," replied my aunt, who had watched the favourable moment;
—ſhe lodges in the neighbourhood; a circumſtance we have hitherto kept ſecret from you, for reaſons you will know hereafter. " Run immediate-
" ly and fetch her, then," ſaid my father; " if you wiſh to make me forget
" your deception, let the horſes be
" put to the carriage without delay."
" That would be loſing time," ſaid I,
" there is no occaſion for it; I will
" go for her myſelf, and we will be
" here in an inſtant.

As I had not yet been out ſince my illneſs, my aunt would not ſuffer me

to

to ſtir; and promiſed I ſhould ſee Mrs. Bellmour in a few minutes. Although my every wiſh was now, to all appearance, on the point of being fully ſatisfied, my heart experienced a certain ſenſation, which I have ever regarded, as the forerunner of misfortune:—every motion in the ſtreet made my heart palpitate; expectation fixed me to the window, from whence I had not once ſtirred ſince my aunt's departure. At length they arrived, but ſeemed to be an age in walking up ſtairs.—The room door opened.—"Good heavens!" exclaimed Mrs. Bellmour, "what do I ſee?" and inſtantly fell back into the arms of my aunt. My father was ſtruck at the ſound of her voice; he was loſt in amazement; for ſome inſtants in doubt whether he ſhould credit his ſenſes; but the emotions of his ſoul

raiſed doubt into certainty. "My "Amelia," ſaid he, "is it you I ſee? "Is it poſſible my cruel hand could "have miſſed its deſperate purpoſe?" "Yes," ſaid Mrs. Bellmour, "heaven "has preſerved your wife."

This appeared to involve a myſtery to me incomprehenſible;—my aunt was equally thunderſtruck;—my father preſſed Mrs. Bellmour in his arms, calling her his wife: he then embraced Charlotte as his daughter, inviting my aunt and me to ſhare his joy. This ſcene, as affecting as myſterious, laſted near a quarter of an hour with the ſame confuſion. At length my father having recovered from the agitation, ſeated himſelf in the midſt of us.

"My children, and you, my ſiſter, lend me your attention, that I may extricate you from that ſtate of

aſtoniſhment into which this unexpected event has involved you all; what I am going to relate, is worthy your ſtricteſt attention. Alas! the guilty need no other puniſhment than their conſcience beſtows, by the recollection of their crimes. However involuntary mine were, they baniſhed from my heart all the ſweets of peace and tranquillity, without which life is but a burthen; and if at times I enjoyed an apparent reſpite from remorſe, my mind was ſunk into a lethargic ſtate of inſenſibility, but knew not the comforts of calm repoſe. I muſt, however, chaſe from my thoughts for a ſhort time the fatal image of a misfortune, the direful remembrance of which would diſable me from making known to you the events that preceded it.

" My father lived at Exeter, and

" generally ſpent ſome of the ſummer
" months at a ſmall houſe he had pur-
" chaſed by the ſea-ſide at Exmouth.
" He was paſſionately fond of fiſhing ;
" my mother and ſelf uſed frequently
" to partake of his diverſion. In one
" of our fiſhing parties, a ſudden
" ſquall aroſe and overſet our boat,
" when in ſpite of the exertions of
" thoſe who had witneſſed the acci-
" dent from the ſhore, from which
" we were not far diſtant, the boats
" ſent to our aſſiſtance could only
" ſave me out of the party. The bo-
" dies of my father and mother were
" thrown aſhore by the tide the next
" morning. On examining our af-
" fairs I found my father had lived up
" to his income, which, though con-
" ſiderable, terminated with his life.
" I was conſequently left pennyleſs.
" But the tenderneſs of an uncle ſup-

" plied the loſs of a parent—He in-
" ſiſted on my living with him—it was
" my wiſh too—he died and left me
" his whole fortune, on condition that
" I ſhould marry the daughter of one
" of his friends, who had been com-
" pelled, from unmerited misfortunes
" to retire to a ſmall village in Dor-
" ſetſhire, where he lived with the
" utmoſt œconomy."

" This clauſe in my uncle's will was the more pleaſing, for I had ſeen the young lady in a journey ſhe made to Exeter with her father, and found in her every qualification proper to conſole me for the loſs I had juſt experienced, and to render my future life peaceable and happy. It was this, my Amelia—After taking poſſeſſion of the fortune bequeathed me by my uncle, I departed for Dorſetſhire; and, on my arrival at the village where

ſhe

ſhe reſided, learnt that her father had died about the ſame time as my uncle. Mr. Fleetwood, after the example of Ariſtides, left, by will, his debts and daughter to his friend. I told Amelia, that, as heir to my uncle, I looked on her as belonging to me by right of inheritance, and that I would willingly take the execution of her father's will on myſelf, however conſiderable his debts might be. Her generoſity induced her to reſiſt my ſolicitations for ſome time; but delicacy ſoon gave way to a more powerful ſentiment.

" Amelia, far from diſſembling the progreſs I made in her affections, ingenuouſly pointed out to me the means of extending it. She poſſeſſed too much ſenſe, and her mind was too free from affectation, to ſeek the gaining by reſiſtance a heart ſhe was ſure of

of obtaining by love. She frequently expreſſed to me her ſurpriſe, that a woman ſhould ever deſignedly ſacrifice thoſe ſentiments, which render exiſtence a bleſſing, to uncertain pleaſures, of which ſhe can ſcarcely form an idea: why, would ſhe ſay, ſhould we not reſign ourſelves with a good grace to the arms of the object deſtined for us by love? Why, by a refinement on prudiſh hypocriſy, ſhrink from the embrace of a lover—a huſband whom we adore? So falſe, ſo miſtaken a policy, is but a ſhameful deception, well adapted to vanity, but unworthy of love.

" Decency required that a certain ſpace of time ſhould be ſuffered to elapſe from the death of her father, before Amelia could become my wife: and as I could not think of leaving her, I employed it in arranging her affairs.

" A

" At length the time arrived:—as we were both catholics, we determined on being married in London, for which place we departed, and were united in the catholic chapel in Queen-ſtreet. Soon after our marriage, I found it neceſſary to go to Holland, to recover ſome conſiderable ſums of money that were due to my uncle from Dutch merchants. My buſineſs did not keep us long in agitation, as my uncle's correſpondents paid me the inſtant I produced my vouchers. In order to procure my wife ſome little amuſement, I took an apartment at the Hague, which, being the reſidence of the court, always wears a face of gaiety and pleaſure. There my wife remained during the little journies I was obliged to make to different towns in order to collect in the various accounts. I had only

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one more to make to Amſterdam, and promiſed my Amelia that my abſence ſhould be ſhort as poſſible. As fortune would have it, the merchant accidentally met me at Leyden; we concluded our buſineſs on the ſpot; and as he was going to the Hague, I returned in his carriage.

My arrival was very late.—Every body was in bed, except a ſingle ſervant who opened the door; and I went ſoftly up to my wife's chamber, flattering myſelf with the idea of an agreeable ſurprize. But, good heavens! what was my aſtoniſhment, when I ſaw Amelia in a profound ſleep, by the ſide of a man, whom I immediately knew to be one of my own ſervants. What horror!—What ſhame! Suffer me to ſuſpend, for an inſtant, a recital that cuts me to the ſoul;—my misfortune affects me as ſenſibly

as

as at the moment it happened ;—my whole life is deſtined to deplore it ; and although it is deeply engraved in my memory by grief, my tongue refuſes its office, and my mind ſhrinks with horror at the bare recollection.

" I remained motionleſs ; my heart floated between revenge and contempt. The laſt ſentiment was on the point of prevailing—I was alone—The wretched couple were faſt bound by the fetters of ſleep—It was in my power to bury my ſhame in the moſt profound oblivion. Gracious God, ſaid I, can two minds ſo fraught with vice, enjoy thus calmly the ſweets of ſleep ! I uttered this exclamation, without thinking on what I was about, with ſuch vehemence, that it diſturbed my wife's repoſe, without entirely awaking her. She turned, and extending her arms, threw them round the

the neck of my bittereſt enemy, the deſtroyer of all my hopes. This renewed my rage—The envenomed blaſt of jealouſy extinguiſhed in a moment the feeble light of reaſon, and urged me on to crime. I drew my hanger and plunged it into the breaſt of the faithleſs Amelia, though with a trembling hand that almoſt ſhrunk from its office. Aſhamed of my own weakneſs, my rage was then directed againſt the monſter who had cauſed it; I ſeized him by the hair, dragged him from the bed he had violated, and from the arms of my perfidious wife. Every ſentiment was loſt in vengeance, and he fell a victim to my diſhonour. I dragged him weltering in his blood to the middle of the chamber; my arm was guided by revenge—but remorſe ſoon followed, and I became a prey to the moſt painful pangs of deſpair.

The

The noiſe brought my own ſervant into the room with a light, which diſcovered the object of my revenge to be—a woman. The ſenſations I experienced at that moment are not to be deſcribed; their force overpowered me—I remained motionleſs for a few ſeconds, and then ſunk ſenſeleſs on the mangled body, which my blind fury had juſt deprived of exiſtence; and on recovering my reaſon, found myſelf in a bark on full ſail.

"You may eaſily conceive how great was my aſtoniſhment; my ſervant was with me. Who brought me hither, ſaid I, addreſſing myſelf to Cooper, where is my wife,—what is become of her? Do not make yourſelf uneaſy, Sir, ſaid Cooper, I will tell you every thing you wiſh to know, as ſoon as we arrive at Antwerp, which muſt be in two hours at moſt; before that time your impatience can not be ſatisfied.

"Cooper

" Cooper was a prudent intelligent man, who had lived with my father, and known me from my infancy. He poſſeſſed ſentiments that would have graced a better ſituation ; and the ſincerity of his attachment to me, had been exerted on many occaſions. The knowledge I had of his diſpoſition, and the air of tranquillity he aſſumed when he ſpoke to me, calmed the agitation of my mind for the ſhort time we remained on the water ; but when we arrived at Antwerp, his ſilence and grief made me feel the full extent of my misfortunes—My heart was torn with deſpair, remorſe, love, and uncertainty. When tears and groans were exhauſted, I fell into a ſtate of depreſſion, bordering on inſenſibility, more alarming than the firſt tranſport of grief. When every faculty of the mind is abſorbed in ſorrow, we appear

pear to enjoy a gloomy tranquillity. Cooper, who juſtly feared this ſettled melancholy would be attended with fatal conſequences, watched a favourable opportunity to ſpeak to me.—Alas! my dear maſter, ſaid he, throwing himſelf at my feet, while the big tear ſtole down his furrowed cheek, I have loſt your confidence—you no longer condeſcend to entruſt me with the cauſe of your ſorrows;—I have attended you from your infancy—I have cheriſhed you as my ſon, pardon the expreſſion, Sir; it does not proceed from a preſumptuous pride founded on the repeated proofs of your eſteem for me; it is the honeſt language of a ſincere heart, zealous for your welfare and happineſs.—Break, Sir, this fatal ſilence, or you will ſhorten the days of your old ſervant;—my life is a burden when no longer

longer uſeful to you;—a puniſhment, if you ſuſpect my fidelity.

" I am too well acquainted with the mildneſs of your diſpoſition, and the goodneſs of your heart, not to be fully perſuaded that the moſt powerful reaſons could alone have urged you to the commiſſion of an act, at which your nature muſt ſhudder.—Theſe words recalled to my mind all the horror of my fate.—Leave me, ſaid I; fly the preſence of a tiger ſtained with blood;—avoid a wretch polluted with crimes, preyed on by remorſe, and deteſtable to himſelf. Is it poſſible your maſter, defiled as he is with the blood of an innocent wife, can ſtill command your reſpect and eſteem? I leave you, Sir! ſaid Cooper, endeavouring to conceal his ſurprize and horror at what he had juſt heard —my heart can never condemn you.

If

If you are guilty—if you have committed the crime of which you accuſe yourſelf, you were doubtleſs forced to it, and your repentance atones for the deed of horror—Alas! ſaid I, it is irreparable! It has deprived me of my Amelia!—Make yourſelf eaſy, Sir, as to her fate, ſaid Cooper, it is not ſo bad as your imagination repreſents it; but I thought it my duty to put you out of the reach of juſtice, whoſe rigourous purſuits you would with difficulty have eſcaped. Make yourſelf eaſy, and leave every thing to my care and zeal. Thus the faithful Cooper endeavoured to allay my grief; he even nouriſhed my hopes, for ſome time, with conſiderable addreſs. It was neceſſary, however, at laſt, to inform me of my true ſituation. He owned to me, that he had paſſed more than half an hour in endeavouring

ing to reſtore us both to ourſelves, but in vain ; that dreading the conſequences of this fatal adventure, he had collected my moſt valuable effects, and put them into a trunk which he fixed behind my chaiſe, and then put the horſes to it ; when that was done, he returned to the room, and found you, my Amelia, cold and lifeleſs ; ſeeing me unhurt, and feeling that my pulſe ſtill beat, he immediately concluded I was the author of the bloody cataſtrophe, and in order to ſecure me from danger, took me on his ſhoulders, placed me in the carriage, and drove me to Rotterdam, with the intention of embarking immediately. He was in the greateſt embaraſſment when he found I did not recover myſelf ; but the time appearing to him too precious to be loſt in reflections, he took advantage of

the obſcurity of the night, drove down to the ſide of the *Meuſe*, where he found a bark, faſtened only by a cable, carried me into it, ſecured the trunk, and then puſhed off from the ſhore, where he left the chaiſe and horſes.

By dint of rowing, at a ſmall diſtance from the ſide, he ſoon came to a fiſherman's hut, and engaged him for a conſiderable ſum to conduct us to Antwerp.

Whatever impreſſion the recital of my misfortunes may have made on you, it can convey but a very feeble idea of my ſufferings; my ſituation was horrible, and I dared not even wiſh for death to relieve me; it is the hope of the unfortunate, but the dread of the guilty; miſery that proceeds from misfortune, renders it "a conſummation devoutly to be wiſhed;"

but remorſe that ſprings from criminality, makes it an object of terror. It was not long before I left Antwerp, and inſtead of returning to Exeter, followed the advice of Cooper, and came to London; he hoped that the amuſements of the capital would diſſipate my melancholy, and work a favourable change. To me all places were alike indifferent; I paſſed ſeveral months in the deepeſt ſorrow; and ſo far from ſeeking to alleviate, familiarized myſelf only with ſuch objects as were capable of affording it nouriſhment. I never miſſed the repreſentation of a tragedy; the bloody cataſtrophes with which they generally terminate, recalled to my mind the painful recollection of my misfortunes.

Cooper, whoſe unexampled fidelity and attention made me conſider him

in the light of a friend than ſervant, perceived the effect theſe gloomy amuſements had on my health, and by degrees diſſuaded me from attending them. He had ſeen enough to know that if I fell into the oppoſite extreme, and only frequented ſcenes of mirth and gaiety, my mind would be diſguſted; and as I now gave myſelf up wholly to his directions, I ſuffered him to dictate ſuch amuſements as he thought beſt adapted to my ſituation.

His invention was fertile, and my fortune, now conſiderable, enabled me to purſue all the ſchemes he ſuggeſted to wean me from my grief; but I partook of theſe diſſipations without taſte, and drew little conſolation from my riches;—there was a void in my heart—the loſſes of love are only to be repaired by its pleaſures.

Being at the play one evening, I

was

was ſtruck with the appearance of two ladies who entered the next box to that in which I was ſitting. One was a young perſon, whoſe dignified air but ill accorded with the extreme ſimplicity of her dreſs, the other older; but there was a ſtrong likeneſs both in their perſons and ſtile of dreſs. The youngeſt had a reſemblance to you, which particularly attracted my notice. Between the acts I was very attentive to their converſation, and found a remarkable conformity in the ſound of her voice, and analogy in her mode of expreſſion. The little ſhe ſaid, in my hearing, inſpired me with a favourable idea of her underſtanding.

I ſtrolled into the park the next day, and was agreeably ſurprized to find the ſame ladies in the mall, accompanied by an old officer who

lodged in the ſame houſe with me. I approached them and bowed to the officer, who ſtopped to ſpeak to me, and aſked me to join them in their walk, an invitation that was willingly accepted. He accordingly introduced me to the ladies. I had now time to contemplate at leiſure the beauty of her who had attracted my attention at the play; it was perfection; nor was her ſenſe inferior to her beauty. Her name was Grenville. We accompanied them home, and I had the pleaſure of finding they lived the very next door to the houſe in which our apartments were.—The officer ſaw me again in the evening, and I took the opportunity to thank him for the pleaſure he had procured me, hinting at the ſame time, I ſhould think myſelf peculiarly happy in improving an acquaintance began under

his

his auſpices. He told me that he had ſome influence over them from being their relation, but that they lived in the cloſeſt retirement, and he was fearful they would not conſent to my accompanying him in his viſits. He however promiſed to aſk their permiſſion, and let me know their anſwer. The next day he called on me, with the information that he had mentioned my requeſt to his couſins, who on finding from him, that I was a recluſe man and that my love of ſolitude was as great as their own, agreed to comply with my wiſhes. He added that he ſhould wait on them in the afternoon, when, if it was agreeable, I might accompany him. We went, and found the ladies at work, which, after the firſt compliments were over, they aſked my permiſſion to continue. It only indeed employed their fingers, their

minds were unoccupied, and they engaged in converſation with that eaſe and freedom that characterizes true breeding:—I had never before met with women whoſe converſation was ſo pleaſant, without being frivolous; ſo embelliſhed, without being pedantic. I learnt from my friend, Captain Beverley, that their father had been an officer of diſtinguiſhed rank and abilities in the ſervice, who had loſt his life in America, when the daſtardly ſons of rebellion, urged on by the baſe artifices of a power, whoſe reputation is ſtained in the annals of hiſtory, with infamy perfidy and puſillanimity, firſt raiſed their ungrateful hands againſt their parent. Colonel Grenville being a man whoſe liberal ſoul placed no bounds to his generoſity, had ever exceeded his income, ſo that at his death, his two

daughters

daughters, in whom he had implanted the moſt liberal accompliſhments, found themſelves in a diſagreeable ſituation.

Mrs. Bellmour interrupted my father, to aſk him, whether Colonel Grenville had not married a Miſs Spencer. My father anſwered in the affirmative. "That Miſs Spencer, ſaid ſhe, was own ſiſter to my mother, and Miſs Grenville was my firſt couſin." "That I learned ſhortly after, purſued my father, and it was the very motive that induced me to offer her my hand. Pardon me, deareſt Amelia, it is an additional crime you'll have to reproach me with; but I did it with the view of fixing your image more ſtrongly in my memory, by uniting myſelf with one of your family; and a perſon who as continually repreſented you to my ſight

by the beauty of her features, as to my heart by the ſuperior qualifications of her mind. Beſides, I thought to alleviate the misfortunes of one who was ſo nearly related to the friend of my uncle, would be not only paying a due reſpect to his memory, but would in ſome meaſure repair the crime I had been guilty of to you." Mrs. Bellmour aſſured my father, that her heart was a ſtranger to every ſentiment but that of tenderneſs. She embraced my aunt as her couſin. My father preſſed them both to his heart; for me, I remained in a ſtate of perplexity, that deadened every faculty of my mind, and prevented me from ſharing their happineſs. A dearer intereſt weighed heavy at my heart, and monopolized its every feeling.

When

When the firſt tranſports of joy were calmed, when the ſentiments of nature and friendſhip were ſatisfied, Mrs. Belmour entreated my father to continue a recital in which all preſent were ſo deeply intereſted.

" My love for your beautiful couſin encreaſed daily ; my acquaintance with her virtues juſtified my paſſion ; I imparted to her ſiſter my intention of offering her my hand ; I was too well acquainted with her diſpoſition to dread that an ill-judged rivaliry would make her look on her ſiſter's eſtabliſhment with an eye of jealouſy ; nor was I deceived in my ideas of the liberality of her ſentiments. My attachment to her ſiſter gave her the trueſt pleaſure ; and the confidence I placed in her drew the warmeſt effuſions of gratitude. " But," ſaid ſhe, " this flattering confidence merits a

return; it is incumbent on me to inform you of a circumſtance that is an eſſential obſtacle to an union, I ſo earneſtly wiſh to ſee compleated; my ſiſter has but"—"an invincible averſion to me," interrupted I haſtily," "my gloomy diſpoſition, my melancholy look have inſpired her with diſguſt for my perſon—I ought to have expected it." "You are guilty of a great injuſtice," ſaid Miſs Grenville; "my ſiſter is lively, but not unreaſonable; and I have always ſeen her give a decided preference to thoſe who are leſs lively than herſelf. The firſt ſight of you inſpired her with ſentiments far from unfavourable. The cuſtom of ſeeing you conſtantly gave her an opportunity of being acquainted with your good qualities, which did not fail to encreaſe an inclination prudence and reaſon forbade her

her to nouriſh, on account of the immenſe diſproportion of your fortunes; ours is very ſmall, and incapable even of affording a ſubſiſtence, without the greateſt exertions of economy. If you do not think this an invincible obſtacle, I can venture to ſay that you will meet no other on the part of my ſiſter; accuſtomed long to read her inmoſt thoughts, I well know her ſentiments in regard to you are as favourable as you could wiſh them. I aſſured Miſs Grenville that the circumſtance ſhe had mentioned as forming an obſtacle to our union, ſhould not retard its completion an inſtant, her frankneſs and delicacy could only tend to augment my confidence and eſteem. She left me to acquaint her ſiſter with the purport of our converſation, and promiſed to bring me a ſpeedy anſwer. My impatience

patience made her abſence appear tedious—in ſuch a ſituation each inſtant appears an age. She at length brought me favourable news; ſhe took me by the hand and led me to her ſiſter, who confirmed, with bluſhing candour, the happineſs to which I had ſcarcely dared aſpire. This was the firſt ſenſation of joy my heart had experienced ſince the loſs of my Amelia: and I enjoyed it with that plenitude of luxury which is only known to a mind that has been long depreſſed by misfortune.—If my heart was guilty of infidelity it muſt hope for your forgiveneſs; I had rather receive pardon for my faults, than praiſe for diſſembling them. Yes, deareſt Amelia, let me repeat, if my heart was guilty, it muſt depend on the goodneſs of your's for excuſe; mine ſhall be expoſed to you without artifice;

artifice; its regrets, its hopes, its grief, its joys, its pains, its pleaſures, all ſhall be revealed; it is a ſubmiſſive ſlave, that has found its long loſt maſter, and renders him an exact account of all its actions. Our marriage was retarded a ſhort time by delays that could not be diſpenſed with. I had changed my own name for that of Conyers, in compliance with the requeſt of a maiden aunt, who had lately died, and left me a conſiderable eſtate in Eſſex. It was under that name, therefore, that I married Miſs Grenville. Some months after our marriage, I was obliged to go into the country to regulate ſome affairs that could not be tranſacted without my preſence. My wife's ill ſtate of health, and her advanced ſtate of pregnancy, rendering it improper for her to make ſo long a journey, I left her

her in town. The difficulty in arranging my affairs, the desire I had of being always near London, the great distance of my estate, determined me to dispose of it, (I had previously sold that which I inherited from my uncle in Devonshire for the same reason) and as a nobleman in the neighbourhood was anxious to purchase, the bargain was completed before my return to town, so that my absence was prolonged much beyond the time fixed upon. As my wife advanced in her pregnancy, her indisposition encreased; the letters from her physician became daily more alarming; she at length arrived at that term which I hoped would put an end to her complaints. I sat out for London, and arrived in time to witness my misfortune; she expired in my arms, after giving me the son

you now ſee. The ſweetneſs of her diſpoſition, her ſubmiſſive mildneſs, her affectionate tenderneſs never varied—Heaven gave her to me to repair the loſſes I had ſuſtained, if ſuch loſſes could be deemed reparable.

Miſs Grenville, who was kind enough to remain with us, has contributed not a little, to render more ſupportable, days condemned to bitterneſs and grief. It was doubtleſs the intention of Heaven to prove my ſoul by ſuffering, to purify my heart by pain, that I might be worthy the happineſs its hand had prepared for me. But let us hear, my dear Amelia, by what events your days have been marked, from the fatal moment of our ſeparation."

" I will moſt willingly ſatisfy your curioſity," ſaid Mrs. Bellmour, " but I muſt firſt take ſome hours of repoſe; your

your recital has depreſſed my ſpirits; every faculty of my mind was ſuſpended; I could with difficulty reſpire while you ſpoke."

My father begged my aunt to ſhew his wife to his own apartment; ſhe ſlept till evening. This interval was diſtreſſing indeed; at laſt we aſſembled in the drawing-room; as ſoon as we were ſeated, ſhe began as follows:

"I know not whether you recollect," addreſſing herſelf to my father, "with what earneſtneſs I entreated you to take into your ſervice, the day before we left England for the Hague, a young Frenchman, named Le Clerq, who I told you had been ſtrongly recommended to me by a friend, whoſe requeſts, with me, had the force of commands." "Alas!" ſaid my father, "I recollected it but too well

well, when I found him aſleep by your ſide." "Well," ſaid Mrs. Bellmour, "that hapleſs victim of a rage which you thought juſtifiable, was a young girl, who had been recommended to me by Lady Radcliffe; my friend's earneſt ſolicitations, the good qualities of which ſhe aſſured me the object of her recommendation poſſeſſed, and the ſingular events of her life, intereſted me highly in her favour. She was deſirous of quitting England, in order to elude the unwearied purſuits of her enemies, who not content with having driven her from her native land, had employed emiſſaries in London to trepan her, that ſhe might be re-conveyed to France, and conſigned to perpetual impriſonment; it was in order to diſguiſe herſelf more effectually that ſhe had aſſumed the dreſs of a man. Her

dread

dread that you would not take her into your ſervice, if you knew ſhe was a woman in diſguiſe, prevented me from diſcloſing the circumſtance; and the extreme repugnance I knew you to poſſeſs to every thing that wore an air of myſtery and adventure, deterred me from making known to you the events of her life.

The great care this unfortunate girl took of me, during our paſſage from Harwich to Helvoetſluys, which was unuſually long, and made me extremely ill; her ſubſequent zeal and attention, endeared her to me more and more; ſhe had received a very good education, the effects of which were conſpicuous in her converſation, which was agreeable and inſtructive; her thoughts were conceived with judgment, and expreſſed with energy; I liſtened to her with ſingular plea-

ſure,

ſure, and during your frequent abſences from the Hague ſhe was my conſtant companion. The evening of your departure for Amſterdam, I begged her to give me a ſuccinct account of her adventures, as Lady Radcliffe had only acquainted me with the leading facts.

Le Clerq was pleaſed to have an opportunity of diſburthening her mind; the misfortunes of love are not unfrequently ſoothed by a relation of the cauſes that gave them birth; her recital intereſted me ſo much, that I begged ſhe would not omit the moſt trivial circumſtance, and her exactneſs to comply with my requeſt, made it very late before her tale was finiſhed. As my impatience would not ſuffer her to quit me before ſhe had concluded, I told her to come to bed to me—that imprudence occaſioned

caſioned all the misfortunes you have this day related. But let me throw the veil of oblivion over the fatal picture that you have already repreſented to us in ſuch frightful colours ;—although in your mouth the relation of thoſe horrid ſcenes wore the affecting language of repentance, in mine, they might appear to be tinged with the odious colours of reproach.

When the man who had the care of your horſes went to the ſtable to dreſs them, you may eaſily conceive how great was his ſurprize at not finding them there; he ſaw alſo, that the chaiſe had been taken from the coach-houſe; he went immediately to Cooper's roo m, buthe was not to be found. He then came to the door of my apartment, at which he knocked repeatedly, but in vain, nobody anſwered. He thought every body

was

was departed, and had left him behind; a ſecond time he eſſayed the door of my chamber, and peeping through the key hole, perceived the bloody corpſe of Le Clerq extended on the floor. He immediately called in the neighbours, and having broken open the door, they found two women weltering in their blood. By the heat of my body they knew there might be hopes of reſtoring me to life, and ran for a ſurgeon, who on examining my wound, declared it not to be mortal; the inſtrument he made uſe of to probe it, cauſed me ſuch pain, as made me give ſome ſigns of returning life. The criminal magiſtrate who had been informed of the affair, came attended by a file of muſqueteers, to take poſſeſſion of the houſe; when they had fulfilled all the forms of juſtice, by taking an exact

exact account of the ſtate of the body, &c. &c. the unfortunate Le Clerq was interred; the poor ſervant was conducted to priſon, and I had a guard placed at my chamber door, there to remain till I ſhould be in a ſituation to undergo an examination. They examined all the neighbours, but in vain; they could not diſcover the leaſt trace of this melancholy cataſtrophe. What is very extraordinary the horſes returned with the chaiſe—without a ſoul to conduct them. The judge did not fail to ſeize, and confiſcate them to his own profit; nay, I am not ſure that they were not examined, ſo ſcrupulouſly do they obſerve *forms* in that country, to the great detriment of real juſtice, like many modern philoſophers, who quit ſubſtantial wiſdom to purſue its airy ſhadow.

I was

I was no ſooner in a condition to be moved, than conveyed to priſon, where I underwent ſeveral examinations during a year's confinement, without any other means of ſubſiſtence than what I found in the charity of well-diſpoſed perſons. There is great reaſon to ſuppoſe that the judge had totally forgotten me; and I ſhould probably have died in priſon, but for the protection of Heaven, who ſent Lady Radcliffe to my aſſiſtance. Affairs of importance brought her to the Hague; one of her ſervants had had a diſpute at a billiard-table, with a young man of reſpectable family, and had ſtruck him; in conſequence of which he had been taken into cuſtody by the guard, and ſent to the ſame priſon in which I was confined. Her ladyſhip, with ſome difficulty, obtained an order for his

 diſcharge,

diſcharge, and prompted by that humanity for which ſhe was ſo eminently diſtinguiſhed, went herſelf to the priſon to deliver the order for his releaſe.

A certain air which ever diſtinguiſhes a perſon of education, though reduced to the loweſt ſtate of wretchedneſs; a gown which, though in rags, ſtill ſhewed that it was made of a very rich ſilk, induced my lady to ſingle me out as an object of attention from amidſt the numerous wretches who crouded this abode of horror; an infant I held in my arms attracted her notice—my features, though changed by grief and miſery, gave her a confuſed idea that ſhe had ſeen me before;—but ſhe was ſo far from ſuppoſing it poſſible that I could be reduced to ſuch a ſituation, that it was merely from a motive of compaſſion

that

that ſhe enquired of the jailor the cauſe of my confinement. He told her all he knew, in a few words, but theſe few words were ſufficient to intereſt her generous mind in my favour; ſhe aſked permiſſion for me to go into the jailor's room to ſpeak to her, which being granted, I went, and immediately knew her. Alas! My deareſt Lady, ſaid I, in what a ſituation do you find me?—The ſound of my voice fixed the ideas that had preſented themſelves to her mind, and made her recollect me. "Amelia! ſaid ſhe, is it you, or do my eyes deceive me?—Good Heavens! what can have reduced you to this ſtate of miſery—what child is that?"—'She is,' anſwered I, ſhedding a flood of tears, 'the ſole pledge of an unhappy marriage, the daughter of an unjuſt and cruel—though ſtill beloved—huſ-

band.' It was my Charlotte, to whom I had given birth about ſix months before."

Although we had all been in expectation of this avowal, the fall of the heavens would have cauſed me leſs aſtoniſhment—ſo little do we give ourſelves leave to expect, when hope languiſhes for the contrary. The moment ſhe pronounced it, an exclamation of joy, and another of grief, was uttered at the ſame inſtant; joy, at finding a father, ſolely occupied the heart of Charlotte; grief, at diſcovering a ſiſter in my intended bride, filled mine with deſpair; I had earneſtly wiſhed to ſee her the wife of my father, but I could not ſupport the idea of her being his daughter; the greater the value of the ſacrifice I had prevailed on myſelf to make, the leſs could I bear to renounce it without an adequate recompence to afford

me

me conſolation.—The loſſes of love can only be repaired by the ſentiments of generoſity.

Mrs. Bellmour having joined her careſſes to thoſe of her daughter, continued thus. "I informed my lady of the fatal event to which the unfortunate Le Clerq had fallen a victim, and whoſe terrible conſequences had reduced me to the ſituation in which ſhe ſaw me; but I was not able to acquaint her with the particular circumſtances attending it; your hanger, that had been found in the chamber, ſtained with blood, and the evidence of your correſpondent, who depoſed that he had himſelf brought you to the Hague in his own carriage, the very day on which you had left it, afforded no room to doubt who was the author of the bloody cataſtrophe. I eaſily conceived that my

imprudence in concealing from you the ſex of Le Clerq, had been the cauſe of that jealouſy whoſe blind rage had led you to take ſuch a deſperate mode of revenge; but your flight with Cooper appeared to me contradictory to the natural goodneſs of your heart, and to the known firmneſs of your mind.

Lady Radcliffe did not reſt till ſhe had procured me my liberty, which was in about a week after our firſt meeting; ſhe conducted me to her own hotel, where every aſſiſtance and attention were paid me, that the tendereſt friendſhip could ſuggeſt or ſupply. It was my intention to ſet off immediately in ſearch of you, but her ladyſhip thought it would be more prudent to write to you firſt, in order to prove my innocence, in caſe you ſhould not be already convinced of it; beſides,

beſides, a ſhort repoſe was abſolutely neceſſary to eſtabliſh my health, which had been conſiderably impaired by grief and confinement.

I waited impatiently for an anſwer to my letter, but none came; at the expiration of a month I wrote to the perſon who had been your ſteward in Devonſhire, whoſe name I had not forgotten; his anſwer was received nearly three weeks afterwards, which informed me, that you had diſpoſed of all the property you had in that country, and that he had not ſeen you ſince; he added, that he could not ſay, for certain, where you had fixed your abode, but he imagined it was at London.

This afflicting anſwer made me know the full extent of my misfortunes, and deſtroyed my every hope. I ſaw that you had renounced me for ever,

and ſhould doubtleſs have given way to deſpair, but for the tender affections of a mother, whoſe only proſpect of conſolation was her infant daughter, and the ſincere friendſhip of Lady Radcliffe, who took every pains to ſoothe my troubled mind to peace; ſhe even offered to take me to London, to make every poſſible enquiry, though ſhe ſhould be obliged to go incog, as her fortune was not competent to ſupport her in a ſtile ſuitable to her rank. Hope, that never-failing reſource of the afflicted, made me accept her friendly offer; we remained a month longer at the Hague, and then departed for London. During a whole year that we ſtaid there, all our enquiries were fruitleſs, owing, doubtleſs, to your having changed your name.

We had apartments in the houſe of a very

a very reſpectable couple, who did every thing in their power to promote the ſucceſs of our enquiries, but their endeavours were vain. Lady Radcliffe propoſed leaving my daughter with them, during a journey ſhe was obliged to make to Paris, where her preſence was requiſite, to ſettle ſome affairs in which her perſonal intereſt was eſſentially concerned, and whither ſhe inſiſted on my accompanying her, kindly telling me that my company was neceſſary to her happineſs. You know Lady Radcliffe's family had firmly eſpouſed the intereſt of the Pretender—her eldeſt brother's life had fallen a ſacrifice to the attachment he bore that unfortunate prince—and the family eſtates had been all confiſcated to the crown. From the wrecks of the family fortune her ladyſhip had amaſſed ſufficient to pur-

chaſe an eſtate of about a thouſand a year in the neighbourhood of Paris, which, with a penſion ſhe received from the French king, in conſideration of her family's attachment to his protected tool, and their conſequent misfortunes, enabled her to live comfortably, though not in that ſplendour to which her birth entitled her. She had fixed her reſidence in Paris, where I firſt became acquainted with her during my abode at the convent whither my father had ſent me to be educated in the principles of that religion our family ever profeſſed; with the abbeſs whereof ſhe was intimately connected. She was now called to Paris by a letter ſhe received from a French nobleman, who informed her that the Court of Verſailles viewed her journey to London with an eye of jealouſy and ſuſpicion, and that he

had ſome reaſon to believe it was in agitation to withdraw her penſion, though he did not doubt but that her immediate preſence would effectually ward off the impending ſtroke, and make it recoil on thoſe who had dared to call her honour in queſtion. We arrived at her ladyſhip's hotel in Paris, five days after our departure from London, but the machinations of her enemies had ſo effectually ſucceeded, that within twelve hours after our arrival, ſhe was taken from her houſe by the guards of the police, in virtue of a *lettre de cachet*, and conveyed to the Baſtile. All her remonſtrances were treated with neglect, her penſion was withdrawn, her eſtate confiſcated, and herſelf condemned to perpetual impriſonment. This was the work but of three days; for in France, when the intereſt of the

king—the king's miniſter—or the miniſter's valet de chambre is concerned, juſtice moves on wings; though in all other inſtances ſhe limps on crutches —ſuch are the bleſſed effects of deſpotiſm! All the indulgence Lady Radcliffe could poſſibly obtain was, that ſhe ſhould be allowed a female attendant, if ſhe could procure one who would conſent to ſacrifice her liberty, for ſhe was not to be permitted to leave the Baſtile, after ſhe had once entered it, till her ladyſhip's death.

They ſuffered her to write to me. Her letter contained a requeſt that I would endeavour to find her a perſon, whoſe ſenſe and diſpoſition were calculated to ſoften the terrors of captivity. She engaged to allow her half the penſion they had allotted her, which was five hundred pounds, and to

leave

leave her at her death, the few jewels that remained in her poſſeſſion.

To this requeſt ſhe joined an entreaty, that I would accept a purſe which ſhe had put in her pocket when ſhe was apprehended, and which contained about three hundred pounds in notes; and likewiſe a pair of diamond ear-rings, which ſhe begged me to keep for my daughter till ſhe was old enough to wear them, and then to beg her acceptance of them in remembrance of her.

I had no trouble to find the perſon Lady Radcliffe wiſhed for. I went immediately to the governor of the Baſtile, and propoſed myſelf to attend her ladyſhip.

The Governor, ſurprized, aſked me if I knew the conditions annexed to the permiſſion her ladyſhip had obtained." "Do you know," ſaid he,

"that

"that you are going to ſhut yourſelf up, very likely for the remainder of your days? Have you reflected on what you are about to do?" "Alas! Sir," anſwered I with impatience, "can friendſhip allow herſelf time for *reflection*, when urged on by *gratitude*? No; the warm ſentiments of the heart, are preferable to the cold cautious dictates of prudence. Order the gates to be immediately opened, that I may throw myſelf at the feet of her ladyſhip for ever."

They led me to her chamber;—the moment the door opened, ſhe exclaimed, "what, is it you, my Amelia!"—"Yes, my deareſt friend, it is me, who come never more to leave you; to offer you my feeble ſervices, and to partake of your captivity! good Heavens," ſaid I, "what happineſs can equal mine!—I have now an opportunity of devoting my whole life to your

your ſervice;—of giving you laſting proofs of my friendſhip and gratitude."

"Ah! my dear Amelia," ſaid my lady, preſſing me to her boſom, "the poſſeſſion of a heart like your's, repairs all the frowns of fortune—there lives not another woman capable of ſuch a ſacrifice!"

"What is this mighty ſacrifice," I replied with warmth; "I do but devote to you a life, for the preſervation of which I am indebted to your friendſhip—a life you reſcued from the horrors of miſery and ignominy." "This is too much, Amelia," returned my lady, while ſhe ſhed a torrent of tears, "it is the heighth of virtue thus to diminiſh the value of ſuch an unexampled act of generoſity; carry your friendſhip to as great a length as the nobleneſs of your mind will induce

duce you to ; but deprive me not of my gratitude." "No," ſaid I, my deareſt friend, I feel my own to be too dear to my heart, to wiſh to deprive you of your's ;—let us think no more of paſt troubles, but let the tender attentions of friendſhip make *you* forget the loſs of liberty and fortune, and *me* the ſorrows of love and the fatal effects of jealouſy." Lady Radcliffe poſſeſſed a wonderful mildneſs of manners, with an active and energetic mind ; ſhe had a great fund of wit, liberality, and candour ;—ſhe was learned without pedantry ; a philoſopher without auſterity ;—by nature eloquent, perſuaſion flowed from her lips, and impreſt the hearts of thoſe who heard her ſpeak. Thoſe minds which were moſt hardened in vice, had but to ſee her, to love virtue, whoſe organ was her tongue—whoſe image

image was her perſon. During the eighteen years that I paſſed with her in the Baſtile, I never once regretted the loſs of my liberty.

I will confeſs to you, my dear Conyers, with that frankneſs of which you have ſet me the example, that the ſmoothneſs of the tranquil life I led with Lady Radcliffe conſoled me for all my misfortunes. She remitted punctually every half year, to the people who had the care of my child, the ſum we had agreed on for her board and education. For the two laſt years ſhe had remained at a ſchool in Kenſington; for the wife being dead, the huſband did not think it proper to have her home to his houſe, where there was no female to receive her. They ſpared no pains to form her mind to virtue; in ſhort, I have great reaſon to be pleaſed with the

the education ſhe has received, and ſtill greater at the uſe ſhe has made of it. The moment the eyes of my friend were cloſed in death, I was ordered to quit the priſon; but they would not allow me to take the money which ſhe had ſaved and bequeathed to me; the governor thought proper to convert it to his own profit. At any other time this circumſtance would have given me but little uneaſineſs; but in the ſituation to which I was reduced, this money was my only reſource. I repreſented the matter to the miniſter, and petitioned the Parliament of Paris—but in vain—where every thing is granted to intereſt and protection, little can be expected from claims founded merely on legal juſtice and natural equity. They at laſt granted me the trifling ſum of four hundred pounds; which they gave me to underſtand

derſtand was a matter of favour and not of juſtice. With this ſum I ſat off for London, having nothing to detain me any longer in Paris. I flew to Kenſington to ſee my daughter, and took her home with me; her education was completed; and as I daily diſcovered freſh proofs of the ſweetneſs of her diſpoſition, my tenderneſs for her augmented. Previous to our journey to Paris, Lady Radcliffe adviſed me to change my name, that I might the better be enabled to conceal the ſtory of our misfortunes from my daughter; a knowledge of which would not fail to impreſs her youthful mind with melancholy ideas, which growing into a ſettled gloom, might render her life miſerable. My aſſumed name was Bellmour.

Having paſſed ſome months in London, where I did not fail to renew my

enquiries

enquiries after you, though with no more ſucceſs than formerly, I determined on making a journey into Devonſhire, hoping to find ſome clue that might lead me to a diſcovery of your place of reſidence, if you was ſtill alive. I took Charlotte with me, though I did not tell her the motives of my journey—we went to your former ſteward, but he could give no other intelligence than that which he had before ſent me to the Hague. All further enquiries were fruitleſs, and our return to town was marked with uncertainty and wretchedneſs. I reſolved to live with the greateſt economy, ſtill hoping that you might be diſcovered before our money was totally gone; and therefore returned to a ſmall cheap lodging, which had been taken on my arrival in England, where I remained, till a wretch who had accompanied

companied us in the diligence from Exeter, and in whom I had been weak and imprudent enough to place an entire confidence, deprived me of the power to pay my rent, and reduced me to the ſituation from which your worthy ſon has extricated us;—but for him, we were about to ſink under the accumulated weight of miſery and want; his extreme benevolence and generoſity will be ever preſent to my mind, and render him deſervedly dear to a heart he will partake with you and my daughter. You may have remarked, that hitherto the ſentiments of gratitude have had as powerful an influence on my mind as thoſe of nature and love;—let me aſſure you that they will never diminiſh for a virtuous ſon; for ſo ſhall I ever call him." "To obtain a juſt title to a name ſo dear," anſwered I, ſighing,

" was

"was the only object of my desires—I shall now deem myself too happy to gain it by tenderness and filial affection, since it is forbidden me to procure it by love."

The affecting expressions of friendship, the warm caresses of nature, the precious tears of sentiment were now renewed; my father, Charlotte, her mother, my aunt, and self, locked in each other's embraces, formed but a single group—what a scene to a feeling mind!—we were all united by the firm ties of nature, gratitude, and friendship. My heart was bound by a tie still stronger, though perhaps less pure. My father was aware of it, and addressed me thus:—"My son," said he, "you did not hesitate to sacrifice to me a warrantable passion, that Charlotte had then inspired you with; I have no doubt but that reason,

ſon, joined to the firm principles of honour and virtue, will have as much power over your heart, as the ſentiment of filial affection.—If poſſible, from love, nature, and friendſhip form one ſentiment as warm as laſting, which will impart ſatisfaction and tranquillity to your mind, and happineſs to your days—happineſs that is only to be found in the true principles of virtue.

My father expreſſed a deſire to hear the adventures of the unfortunate Le Clerq, and his wife promiſed to ſatisfy him the next day, when ſhe produced ſome ſheets of manuſcript, which ſhe told us contained the hiſtory we were ſo curious to be acquainted with; ſhe added, that it was written by Lady Radcliffe, for amuſement, during the latter part of her impriſonment, when they relaxed

laxed ſomewhat from their firſt ſeverity, by allowing her books, and the neceſſary implements for writing.

HISTORY

Hiſtory of Henrietta le Clerq.

HENRIETTA LE CLERQ, was born at Tours, the capital of Touraine, of honeſt and induſtrious parents, who gave her an education adapted to her ſituation in life. Her fortune, which was bequeathed her by a maiden aunt, was what the world calls moderate; but more likely to procure her eaſe and tranquillity; for immenſe wealth is but too often accompanied by the inordinate deſires of ambition, or the inſatiable thirſt of avarice—two paſſions which effectually mar the ſeeds of happineſs.

The firſt years of Henrietta's life were calm and tranquil, but love raiſed a ſtorm that interrupted their repoſe. In her figure were united grace, elegance, and eaſe; and her face eminently poſſeſſed thoſe charms

of beauty, which conſtitute the firſt pride of our ſex, though ſo often productive of fatal conſequences.

As they were talking one day at the Count de B—'s of thoſe beauties of the court whoſe charms were moſt in faſhion, a gentleman of Tours, a particular friend of the Count's, obſerved that thoſe who paſſed for perfect, and whoſe reputation for beauty were the greateſt and beſt eſtabliſhed, would ſoon loſe the glory they had acquired, by a compariſon with a young girl he had frequently ſeen at Tours; and to ſupport his aſſertion, he deſcribed the perſonal charms of Henrietta with ſuch enthuſiaſm, as made a ſtrong impreſſion on the mind of young Gaſton, the count's ſon, a youth of violent paſſions, ardent, impatient, and enthuſiaſtic. He was anxious to ſee whether his father's

ther's friend had exaggerated in his account of Henrietta's attractions, and determined to ſatisfy his curioſity the next day; when under the pretence of going to Verſailles, where he had not been for ſome time, he obtained his father's permiſſion to depart.

When he had travelled ſome leagues, he ſent his ſervants forward to Paris, with orders to wait his arrival, and took the road to Tours, followed only by his own man, the confidant and agent of his amours. As ſoon as he arrived, he made enquiries after Henrietta, and found no difficulty in diſcovering the abode of a perſon who was the toaſt of the country. In order to get introduced to her mother, he was obliged to have recourſe to the very gentleman who had firſt mentioned her to him at his father's, to whom he enjoined the ſtricteſt ſecrecy,

and requeſted to paſs him as a private country gentleman.

Henrietta had lately loſt her father, and her mourning gave an additional luſtre to her charms, by affording a contraſt to the delicacy of her complexion. Gaſton was exceedingly ſtruck with her at his firſt introduction, and ſoon began to perceive that he ſhould pay dearly for his curioſity. He was aſſiduouſly attentive, and poſſeſſing many accompliſhments, as well mental as external, it is not ſurprizing that he ſhould make an impreſſion on the youthful and ſuſceptible heart of Henrietta; and this diſcovery, by inſpiring him with hopes, encreaſed his affection. Henrietta, herſelf, who had refuſed many advantageous offers, felt that ſhe ſhould have been leſs indifferent to the lovers who had preſented themſelves, had they

they borne any reſemblance to Gaſton. She was prudent and circumſpect in her conduct. But innocence and candour are feeble barriers to oppoſe the attacks of love. Gaſton, by means of his friend, had been introduced to a few families, who were ſtrangers to his father, which Henrietta and her mother viſited, and had thereby frequent opportunities of ſeeing and converſing with her. When they met, his every glance was expreſſive of love, and ſhe was compelled to caſt her eyes on the ground leſt they ſhould betray the tender emotions of her ſoul. Looks and ſighs were for ſome time the ſole interpreters of their hearts; notwithſtanding the favourable diſpoſition in which Gaſton ſaw the object of his affection, he had not yet dared to talk to her of love, whoſe true language is ſilence and reſpect.

He at length however ventured to aſk her mother's permiſſion to pay his addreſſes in form, which was readily granted; and he took the earlieſt opportunity to profit by it, by making known the ardour of his ſentiments to the object who had inſpired them. Her mother was gone into the country, and had left Henrietta ſole guardian of the houſe, and of her heart. The firſt part of the charge ſhe had no difficulty in obſerving, and love took the laſt on himſelf. Gaſton finding her alone, after the uſual embaraſſment attending a firſt declaration, proceeding from the dread of a repulſe, and the fear of expreſſing ill, that which is beſt felt,—informed her of his love. "Yes, Henrietta," ſaid he, "I adore you; hitherto my ſilence has been a proof of my love, but the ardour of my paſſion, and the

happineſs of my future life, compel me to break it. My father, inflexible and proud, would raiſe almoſt inſurmountable obſtacles to my hopes, were he made acquainted with them; he now thinks me at Verſailles; for know, Henrietta, I am ſon to the Count de B—." The avowal of his birth, which honour induced Gaſton to join to the declaration of his paſſion, might perhaps flatter Henrietta's vanity, but did not augment her affection. "Why," ſaid ſhe, looking on him with eyes that ſpoke her love, "why did you diſcover your birth? why not leave me the hope at leaſt of being one day united to you by indiſſoluble ties? Why deprive yourſelf of the pleaſing ſatisfaction of knowing that you are beloved, for yourſelf alone?"

"Believe me, my angel," replied Gaſton with warmth, "all attempts

to oppoſe our union will be fruitleſs; bleſt with your love, what difficulties would I not encounter, what obſtacles would I not ſurmount?—Yes—I here ſwear never to own another wife than Henrietta Le Clerq." Proteſtations, promiſes, oaths, all were employed by Gaſton to perſuade Henrietta that nothing ſhould prevent their marriage—nor were they employed in vain. So eaſy is it to ſeduce a heart that meets ſeduction half way!

After a thouſand aſſurances of tenderneſs and eternal love, prudence urged them to a ſeparation, which, however indiſpenſible, was not leſs afflicting; Gaſton went to Verſailles, and from thence returned to his father's, without a hope of inducing him to conſent to the completion of his wiſhes: and yet, with a determination

nation to perſevere in the reſolution he had taken.

He knew that the daughter of the Baron de C— had long been deſtined for him; that nobleman on his death-bed had ſtill perſiſted in his deſigns, which were perfectly conſiſtent with the views of Gaſton's father; and the extreme youth of the lady had been the only reaſon for retarding the marriage. A whole year paſſed away in a ſtate of uncertainty; Gaſton, who took frequent trips to Tours, encouraged Henrietta, and made her hope, that in time he ſhould find a favourable opportunity of inducing his father to give his conſent to their union. During this time the mother of Henrietta died; ſhe was now her own miſtreſs, and gave herſelf up to the pleaſure of ſeeing her lover without conſtraint—ſhe had not informed a

of her friends of the paſſion Gaſton entertained for her. The firſt ſtep towards vice, is to make a myſtery of innocent actions—ſhe who is myſterious from inclination, is ſoon compelled to be ſo from neceſſity.—This was the cale with Henrietta. Without a guide, without experience, ſeduced by the flattering illuſions of Hope, perſecuted by her own paſſions, as much as by the purſuits of her lover, ſhe had not force to reſiſt the attractions of pleaſure, and fell a victim to ſenſibility.

Gaſton, rendered happy by the poſſeſſion of the idol of his heart, did not become inconſtant—but he became jealous and ſuſpicious—each day exacting ſome new ſacrifice. The tender and ſubmiſſive Henrietta, thought the tranquillity of her lover could not be purchaſed at too dear a rate; but

Gaſton

Gaſton took advantage of her ſubmiſſion, to render her life unhappy. When alone, ſhe did not ceaſe to lament her error—but it was too late—In ſuch circumſtances a woman ſhould prefer the pain of overcoming her inclinations, to the grief of bewailing her fault—repentance does not reconcile us to ourſelves, much leſs to the world.

This fatal paſſion of Gaſton led him into a diſagreeable tranſaction, from which he would have found great difficulty to extricate himſelf, but for the tender attachment of the fond Henrietta, who formed a ſcheme for his delivery, which the inventive imagination of love was alone capable of conceiving, and his courageous heart alone equal to the execution of. Gaſton was at an aſſembly, where the great beauty of his miſtreſs was

the ſubject of converſation; one man was ſo warm in her praiſe, that he thought it could only be dictated by a ſentiment much warmer than that of ſimple admiration. This was a ſufficient cauſe to induce him to quarrel with the gentleman; for which purpoſe he took an opportunity of giving a flat contradiction to ſome aſſertion he had made in the courſe of converſation. The other, little accuſtomed to ſuffer an inſult to paſs unnoticed, anſwered with that aſperity the occaſion amply juſtified. Gaſton, whoſe reaſon was obſcured by jealouſy, repeated the inſult; the company did all they could to make him ſenſible of the impropriety of his conduct, but in vain; they were liberal of their cenſure, and gave him to underſtand, in terms barely equivocal, that his preſence would be diſpenſed with.

Piqued

Piqued to the ſoul he left the room, glancing an expreſſive look at his adverſary, who ſoon followed him; when at a convenient ſpot they drew, and at the firſt thruſt, Gaſton laid him dead at his feet. A duel in which an old officer of diſtinguiſhed bravery had fallen by the arm of a man who had repeatedly proved himſelf a coward in the hour of danger, had lately awakened the ſeverity of the laws, and the King had expreſſed his firm determination of making an example of the firſt man who ſhould dare to violate them, however diſtinguiſhed his rank, however elevated his ſituation. Gaſton immediately fled for Paris, with a view to conceal himſelf, till his father, who was a great favourite at court, ſhould procure his pardon; but notwithſtanding his expedition, he was overtaken before he reached

reached the capital. Henrietta, who had ſent a faithful ſervant to follow him, and to bring her word where he had taken refuge, was ſhocked on hearing he was made a priſoner ; ſhe knew, that once in the hands of juſtice, all his father's credit would ſcarcely be ſufficient to obtain his freedom ; ſhe therefore contrived the following ſtratagem to extricate him from the ſituation to which his mad jealouſy had deſervedly reduced him.

It was a matter of certainty that they would bring him back to Tours, as the law required he ſhould be tried at the place where the offence was committed ; ſhe therefore ordered the ſame ſervant who had followed Gaſton, to drive a waggon to a certain ſpot which ſhe pointed out to him, and to overturn it in a hollow way, in ſuch a manner as effectually to bar the paſ-

ſage ;

ſage; which was not difficult, as the road in that part was extremely narrow. She went herſelf about two miles beyond the defile to the corner of a wood, where taking off her gown and cap, ſh pulled her hair over her face, and ſcratched i in ſeveral places, till it bled; in this condition ſhe waited the arrival of the Maréchauſés, (a ſort of military thief-takers) which, from the intelligence that was brought her, ſhe knew could not be long delayed. They were obliged to paſs the wood in which ſhe had concealed herſelf;—in about an hour they appeared; as ſoon as ſhe perceived them, ſhe ſet up a moſt lamentable cry; they immediately ran to her aſſiſtance, and aſked her for a relation of her ſtory; ſhe anſwered, that ſhe kept a ſhop at a town not far diſtant; that ſhe was going to Paris to purchaſe ſome articles of commerce;

commerce; that ſhe had taken with her about three hundred Louis d'Or for that purpoſe; that a man who had joined her ſoon after ſhe left a village a few miles off, where ſhe dined, attacked her at the entrance of that wood and robbed her of all her money, after putting her in the ſtate in which they ſaw her; and added, that in the ſtruggle ſhe had received a violent blow on the ancle, which made it impoſſible for her to walk to the next village, for ſhe could ſcarcely ſet her foot to the ground. The captain of the Meréchauſés, touched with compaſſion at her ſituation, placed her in the chaiſe between him and Gaſton, to whom ſhe made a ſign that prevented an exclamation of ſurprize, which would infallibly have betrayed them and fruſtrated her plan.

" How

"How long is it ſince you was attacked?" ſaid the captain; "Not more than half an hour," replied Hentietta, "and I am perſuaded, if you would ſend one of your people after the thief, he would be ſure to overtake him, particularly as he is only mounted on the mule he took from me, which cannot go faſt; for the poor creature was almoſt tired before dinner. If you could recover my money for me, I would willingly give you half of it for your trouble."

This offer tempted the captain, who diſpatched two of his men in purſuit of the imaginary thief; he told them he would ſtop for them at the next village, and they rode off full ſpeed. Henrietta continued to complain loudly of the pain ſhe felt in her ancle, ſo that Gaſton knew not whether ſhe was really hurt or not.

At

At length they arrived at the defile, where the ſervant was waiting for them; he had thoroughly executed the orders he had received from his miſtreſs, by blocking up the road in ſo effectual a manner, as to render it totally impoſſible to paſs.

The two men who had remained with the captain, were obliged to alight from their horſes to aſſiſt the poor waggoner to lift up his waggon; when Henrietta ſaw them buſily employed, ſhe drew a piſtol from under her petticoat and clapped it to the captain's breaſt—"if you utter a ſyllable, or make the leaſt attempt to ſtir, you are a dead man," ſaid ſhe, with a firmneſs that alarmed him. "The ſtep I have taken to reſcue my huſband, muſt convince you I am deſperate; take your choice, inſtant death, or this purſe which contains five hundred

dred Louis d'Or; if you chooſe the latter, ſpeak, and you may be aſſured the Count de B. who is father to your priſoner, will reward you ſtill better." Whether he was influenced by fear, avarice, or reſpect for the name of the count, the captain conſented to ſuffer Gaſton to eſcape. "But," ſaid he, "I am not alone, and how will you prevent my men from—" "do not be under any apprehenſions on that head," replied Henrietta, "it is not my deſign that you ſhould run the leaſt riſk; my plan is laid, and its execution is eaſy."

The captain ſuffered himſelf to be perſuaded, took the purſe, untied the cords which confined the arms of Gaſton, and ſubmitted to be tied with them himſelf. Then Gaſton and his generous miſtreſs jumped out of the chaiſe, and ſeized one of the men who

who was employed in raiſing the waggon, while the ſervant, who was a ſturdy fellow, took the other by the collar and diſarmed him. They then tied them both, hand and foot, with as much facility as they had previouſly tied their captain.

Henrietta wrapped herſelf up in one of the men's cloak's, and mounted one of the horſes; Gaſton did the ſame with another, and the ſervant followed them on one of the waggon horſes, after ham-ſtringing the reſt, leſt the men ſhould think proper to purſue them. They rode all night, and got to Paris by break of day, where they eaſily concealed themſelves till the Count de B. obtained his ſon's pardon. Thus the generous love of Henrietta extricated her lover from a difficulty into which the ferocity of his own had plunged him.

This

This heroic action made great noise in the world; every body praised the address and courage of Henrietta; the Count de B. himself (who was by this time acquainted with every circumstance of her connexion with his son), could not withhold his admiration; and knowing that a noble mind is capable of every exertion, he resolved to apply to Henrietta herself to restore his son to a true sense of his duty, and dispose him to accept the lady who had been so long designed for his wife. He accordingly went to her, and addressed her, as follows: "I am the Count de B. let not my name alarm you; the father of Gaston knows to love and respect virtue, wherever he meets with it; your's I have deemed capable of the effort which I come to require; the sacrifice is great, and therefore worthy a mind

a mind like your's; the happineſs of two families who hold the firſt rank in the kingdom, your own, and that of your lover, depend on it; I do not offer you the half of my fortune, becauſe I know you have a ſoul incapable of being ſwayed by mercenary conſiderations; the pleaſure of doing a virtuous action, can be the only reward for ſo generous a ſacrifice. If, however—" "There is nothing," replied Henrietta, trembling and confuſed, "nothing that I would not willingly do to merit the eſteem with which you honour me, and to promote the happineſs of your ſon; it would be vain to attempt concealing from you how dear he is to me, ſince to him I have ſacrificed my liberty and reputation. Speak—what new ſacrifice is neceſſary to enſure his happineſs?—is it requiſite I ſhould ſacrifice

my

my love—?" "I foreſaw it—moſt adorable girl," ſaid the count, embracing her with tears in his eyes;" "you would richly merit the rank you abandon, were it the price of virtue; but cruel prejudice—the intereſt of two noble families—" "You have ſaid enough, count," interrupted Henrietta, "my lover's intereſt can determine me to any thing; that woman muſt love feebly indeed who could refuſe to ſacrifice her own happineſs to that of her lover. I expect Gaſton every moment; if you will conceal yourſelf in the dark paſſage at that corner of the room, you will hear that I am capable of keeping my word."

She had ſcarcely ſpoken when they heard Gaſton's carriage ſtop at the door; the count concealed himſelf, and Henrietta endeavoured to compoſe her countenance, that ſhe might receive

receive her lover with as great firmneſs as poſſible; but he perceived in her face leſs tranquillity than appeared in her converſation. There are certain ſituations in which our features, notwithſtanding the utmoſt endeavours to reduce them to obedience, will obſtinately refuſe to belie the emotions of the heart. Gaſton, ever reſtleſs and ſuſpicious, inſiſted on knowing the cauſe of that trouble which was but too viſible.

"It is not aſtoniſhing," ſaid Henrietta, "that the reſtraint I impoſe on my heart, ſhould cauſe ſome alteration in my countenance. I do not think it neceſſary to aſſure you of my love; but if the proofs I have hitherto given you of its force and ſincerity have been inſufficient to convince you, *what* I am now about to offer is too unequivocal to be miſtaken.

Gaſton

Gaſton ſeized her in his arms, and aſſured her he demanded no additional proof.—" Be ſeated and liſten to me coolly," ſaid ſhe, with a firmneſs ſhe endeavoured to aſſume, though it almoſt overpowered her.

" The laſt proof I can give you of my love, is to ſacrifice it to your intereſt; I will not be the inſtrument of dividing two reſpectable families; I will not be the founder of your misfortunes; your diſobedience would plunge a dagger in the breaſt of a father who merits your reſpect and affection;—in ſhort, my dear Gaſton, we muſt part—the idea rends my heart—but we muſt never ſee each other more." Gaſton remained motionleſs while ſhe ſpoke; but the violence of his temper overcoming every other emotion, his firſt ſuſpicions returned to his

breaſt with redoubled force, and giving way to his jealouſy, he accuſed the too generous Henrietta of hypocriſy and baſeneſs. The count, who had liſtened to the converſation, hurt at his ſon's conduct, made a motion to come out of the paſſage. Gaſton heard the noiſe, and not doubting but the happy lover to whom his miſtreſs had given the preference was concealed there with a view of being a witneſs to his diſmiſſion; furious at the idea of having ſerved as a trophy to the triumph of his rival, he ran to the door. Henrietta did not wiſh to prevent an ecclairciſſement which muſt, juſtify her innocence; but the darkneſs of the place hindering Gaſton from diſtinguiſhing the count;—he ſeized his father, and plunged his ſword into his heart. A groan which the unhappy count uttered with his

laſt

laſt breath, brought Henrietta to the ſpot with a light. The ſoul of Gaſton was ſtruck with inexpreſſible horror, when he found who had been the victim of his jealous rage. A glance of indignation which he darted at the unfortunate Henrietta, convinced her that he looked on her as the author of his crime, and obliged her to retire in deſpair; but ſhe had ſcarcely left the ſcene of horror, when ſhe heard a ſigh of pain that induced her to return, notwithſtanding the dread of the effect of Gaſton's violent temper. She once more entered the fatal paſſage, and found Gaſton expiring on the body of his father.

Her cries brought up her ſervant, who having learnt from her the cauſe of the bloody cataſtrophe, compelled her to take refuge at Lady Radcliffe's, that ſhe might elude the purſuits of

juſtice. Her ladyſhip, ſtruck with compaſſion at the tale of her misfortunes, received her with hoſpitality and kindneſs; but finding that the moſt diligent ſearch was making after her, perſuaded her to aſſume the dreſs of a man, and took an opportunity of ſending her to me by a faithful friend, who was on his journey to England, adviſing her to ſtay with me, and not to reaſſume her woman's clothes till the ſtorm ſhould be blown over, and her reputation ſhould be juſtified in the eyes of the magiſtrates; a circumſtance ſhe would not fail to give her the earlieſt intelligence of. At the very time ſhe arrived in England, our journey to Holland was reſolved on, and ſhe determined to accompany me in the dreſs and character of a ſervant, the more effectually to ſecure her from ſuſpicion. The circumſtances

ſtances I before mentioned prevented me from entruſting you with her real ſituation, which cauſed the dreadful error to which the unfortunate Henrietta fell an innocent victim.

When Mrs. Bellmour had finiſhed the melancholy hiſtory of Henrietta, my father reproached himſelf in terms of the bittereſt anguiſh for having ſuffered himſelf to be governed by the blind impulſe of jealouſy, and thereby becoming the inſtrument of her death. A proper regard to his feelings induced us all to conceal the ſenſations we experienced at the recital of Henrietta's misfortunes. We ſilently lamented the fate of that unhappy girl, deſtined to be the eternal victim of jealouſy.

Her fate was undoubtedly well worthy our compaſſion—but my own was not leſs to be pitied; nor was

that of Charlotte much happier. The gloomy contagion of ſorrow ſpread like the rapid flames in the ſun-burnt foreſt.—Congenial minds ever ſympathize in grief,—mine had infected the breaſt of my Charlotte, and ſpread a veil of anxiety over her beauteous face.—Conſtantly endeavouring to avoid each other's preſence, we as conſtantly met.—Dwelling under the ſame roof, a thouſand inevitable circumſtances fruſtrated our endeavours, and brought us together a thouſand times a day. Our attempts to overcome our mutual paſſion were vain—our combats uſeleſs—our reſolutions weakneſs—our efforts impotent.—No;—the heart of man is not capable of ſuch exceſs of firmneſs.

Sometimes, overcome by the horrors of my ſituation, I would exclaim in the accents of deſpair,—"Juſt heaven!

heaven!—What crime have I committed, to be condemned to ſuch painful conflicts! my heart is deſtined to experience the ſevereſt puniſhments that could be inflicted on the guilty head of a criminal, for having been alive to the mild and beneficent ſentiments of pity and compaſſion—as a reward for a virtuous action.—I have conſtantly purſued thy paths, ſtern, rigid Virtue!—Yes, I regret having cheriſhed thee!—I have now no merit in obeying thy voice; for the ſacrifice I offer excites my deteſtation of your principles!"

Till then I had only been unhappy;—I now deſired to be culpable. What a ſlave to error is man!—My firmneſs ſunk, in my own eyes, into weakneſs, and honour into prejudice; a phantom who oppoſed my happineſs, which I thought would be per-

fect, as ſoon as I could muſter reſolution to conquer it. Good heavens! To imagine that crime and happineſs could inhabit the ſame breaſt!

It was in one of thoſe moments, when reaſon was obſcured by paſſion, that I found Charlotte aſleep in a ſummer-houſe at the bottom of the garden. The heat of the weather was exceſſive, and though ſhe ſlept, it doubtleſs incommoded her ſo much as to make her involuntarily aſſume an attitude which, while it procured her the advantage of what little air was ſtirring, was peculiarly favourable to her charms.—I was gazing on them with an ardent eye, when ſhe ſuddenly turned herſelf; I immediately retired with that alarm ſo natural to timid love, and which is redoubled by a criminal paſſion!—Before I left the ſummer-houſe, my eyes

eyes would catch a parting look on the object of my affection; I perceived ſhe had not awakened, and I returned to ſeat myſelf by her, with no other wiſh than that of admiration; but finding her in a ſituation ſtill more ſeducing, Love was on the point of conquering. In vain did falling Virtue's feeble voice exclaim againſt the uſurpation of the ſenſes; I was deaf to all but the tumultuous deſires which had taken poſſeſſion of my ſoul. The brilliancy of Charlotte's charms had eclipſed the torch of Reaſon;—I had already dropped my eager trembling hand on the boſom of my ſiſter.—Kiſſes had already begun to ſpread the circulating fire through my veins—my heart dead to every ſenſation but that of love—when Mrs. Bellmour ſuddenly entered the room. Her prudent eye watched us with

maternal care, and never once loſt ſight of us.—Whither could I fly?—where hide my ſhame?—my father's preſence tended to augment it. Gods! how terrible is the ſight of a father—of a virtuous friend to a guilty ſon.—How great was the ſurprize of Charlotte when, opening her eyes, ſhe ſaw them motionleſs with grief, and myſelf overwhelmed with confuſion.—"What am I to think?" ſaid ſhe, trembling as ſhe ſpoke,—"inform me."—"Alas! my ſiſter! ceaſe your enquiries." "Your ſiſter!" exclaimed Mrs. Bellmour, with indignation.—Her look, as ſhe uttered the exclamation, impreſſed my heart with ſhame, remorſe, and deſpair;—I left the room with he moſt fatal treſolutions.

My father, who knew too well the effect of violent paſſions, followed me, and forbade me to leave the garden;

garden; he made me take ſeveral turns with him, without uttering a ſyllable.—I wiſhed to be ſtruck with inſtant annihilation, or that the earth might open, and entomb me in its bowels, to conceal the ſtate of humiliation to which I had reduced myſelf. I was in expectation of reproaches as ſevere as they were merited; nor dared to look my father in the face. My aſtoniſhment was inexpreſſible when I heard him open his mouth to talk of indifferent things. He well knew that when the mind is a prey to tumultuous ſenſations, the voice of reaſon can have but little influence. After walking a conſiderable time, he adviſed me, in a tone of kindneſs, to retire to reſt.

I locked myſelf into my room, and paſſed the moſt uncomfortable night of my life. My father's ſilent grief

affected me more than his loudeſt reproaches could poſſibly have done. I did not quit my bed the whole of the day, which was employed in reflections on human frailty ;—" Who," ſaid I, " can be aſſured, that in all ſituations he will be able to triumph over his paſſions?—Alas! life is too ſhort for pleaſure, and too long for virtue."

Towards the evening my father came to my bed-ſide, and taking me affectionately by the hand, " George," ſaid he, " I flatter myſelf you will not be diſpleaſed to hear what I have been doing for you.—I have juſt parted with general Shelton, and have prevailed on him to take you to Scotland as his aid-du-camp.—He leaves town in three days, ſo that you muſt prepare yourſelf to accompany him."

Having ſaid this, he waited for my anſwer. I felt how trying would be

the ſeparation he required, but yet my reaſon acknowledged its neceſſity, and I therefore told him his will ſhould be mine; and that I could not but be ſenſible of that additional mark of his affection. He left me expreſſing his pleaſure at my acquieſcence.

Every thing was ready at the appointed time, and I departed without taking leave of Charlotte, or her mother. As the general had always accuſtomed himſelf to travel on horſeback, it was ſome days before we reached Scotland; but as he was a well-informed man, and poſſeſſed the art of rendering himſelf agreeable in an eminent degree, being totally exempt from that military pedantry with which our general officers are apt to be infected when arrived at a certain time of life, I paſſed my time as comfortably as the ſtate of my mind

mind would admit of. Abſence is not always a remedy for love; it not unfrequently envenoms the wound it is meant to ſoothe.—In vain I endeavoured to loſe, in the pleaſures of ſociety, and in a ſtrict attention to the duties of my ſtation, the remembrance of a ſiſter—too dear to my ſoul.—In vain did I endeavour to tear her cheriſhed image from my heart—my feeble efforts only ſerved to render the impreſſion ſtill ſtronger.

I often received letters from my father, but his prudent perſeverance in never mentioning the name of Charlotte, did but encreaſe my anxiety; but I at laſt received one, in which he ſpoke of her.—Urged by a ſecret pre-ſentiment, I broke open the letter with precipitation, and my heart more prompt than mine eyes, led them inſtantly to the part that concerned

cerned her. The joy my fluttering boſom confeſſed at the ſight of her name, was too ſoon damped.—The firſt three words rendered me completely miſerable. My father wrote as follows.—

" Charlotte is on the point of being married; her intended huſband is Sir Charles Felton; a man of family.—His fortune is conſiderable, but his eſtate being encumbered with the fortunes of five ſiſters, he has given me to underſtand that although his affection for my daughter is very great, he cannot marry her unleſs I will agree to give him thirty thouſand pounds on the day of marriage. To this propoſal I have deferred giving him a poſitive anſwer till your ſentiments ſhall guide me, for I cannot poſſibly advance ſo large a ſum without mortgaging my eſtate, in order

to

to obtain ſome part of it; and as it was ever my intention to leave you that eſtate, at leaſt unencumbered, I cannot think of depriving you of any part of it without your conſent.—I know the generoſity of your mind, and anticipate your anſwer. Though let me aſſure you, whatever may be your determination, I will rather break off the match, advanced as it is, than encroach on what I deem your rights."

I could not refrain from beſtowing the epithets—faithleſs and perfidious, on the unfortunate Charlotte.—Accuſed her of being volatile and inconſtant—till calm reflection convinced me of my injuſtice; and induced me to believe that my ſiſter had ſacrificed her own happineſs to my tranquillity. To make myſelf, in ſome meaſure, worthy her eſteem, I reſolved, if neceſſary, to promote her

her marriage, by the ſacrifice of all my expectations. When love is ſincere, there is not any ſacrifice of which it is not capable.—The heart that heſitates to give it a decided preference over every earthly conſideration, is far from owning its empire—from knowing the full force of its ſway. I wrote to my father thus:

" Your kindneſs affects me deeply —Charlotte is ever dear to my heart; —but that idea does not prevent me from ſometimes liſtening to the voice of duty; and yet, that voice would have been impotent, but for the dictates of love. I freely conſent to the demands of my ſiſter's intended huſband; nay, ſhould ſtill greater ſacrifices be neceſſary, let me entreat you, ſir, to ſuffer no conſideration of my intereſt to prevent you from acceding to them. If this trivial mark of my

friendſhip

friendſhip for her, is deemed worthy the leaſt return, all I have to requeſt is, that ſhe will not alloy the ſatisfaction I experience in offering it, by ſuperfluous expreſſions of gratitude."

This laſt requeſt was alſo dictated by love; I wiſhed to ſpare my dear Charlotte the extreme embaraſſment into which ſhe muſt have neceſſarily been thrown, had ſhe written me a letter of thanks; for it muſt have been couched in ſuch terms of coolneſs, as muſt inevitably hurt her feelings—I judged of her's by my own.

No ſooner had my conſent been offered to this generous ſacrifice, than I was almoſt recompenſed for the loſs, by the ſenſations ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of having acted up to the principles of honour and virtue.—Thoſe ſenſations which the "*mens conſcia recti*" never fails to experience.

—"Time,"

—"Time," ſaid I, "in reſtoring peace to my heart, will not diminiſh its ſenſibility—It will only augment the happineſs that ſooner or later accrues from the purſuit of virtue—that ray of the Divinity;—that bleſſed gift of heaven is alone capable of conſoling us for the griefs and woes inſeparable from human life. Let us be ſteady then in purſuit of it, from motives of intereſt; the love we bear it is ſeldom ſufficient to fix our admiration, and command our reverence."

Such ſentiments were well adapted to reſtore me to tranquillity; they acted as a ſalutary balm on my heart, which nevertheleſs was not ſo well healed but that the leaſt touch might make it bleed afreſh.

Autumn advanced; and the general meaning to paſs the winter at his ſeat in Scotland, I returned alone to

town

town on horſeback. In the afternoon of the laſt day's journey, within twenty miles of town, I overtook an officer of the guards. He miſtook me for a perſon of his acquaintance, and ſtopped to ſpeak to me; this led us into a converſation, which was kept up with wonderful vivacity, at leaſt on his ſide, till we arrived at Barnet; where we agreed to take a chop, as it was too late to think of reaching London for dinner.

As we ſat over our bottle, after the cloth was removed, my companion, heated by the wine, gave a looſe to his natural diſpoſition; which ſoon gave me an opportunity to perceive that he poſſeſſed all thoſe graceful failings which are peculiarly calculated to pleaſe and ſeduce a ſex, for which he ſeemed to entertain a greater

portion

portion of love than eſteem. After he had ſatisfied his vanity, by giving me a correct account of the different intrigues that had till then ſolely occupied his mind, he told me he was about to put an end to them all—or rather to ſuſpend them awhile, to celebrate his marriage with a lady to whom he was engaged. The air of frivolous indifference with which he talked of this marriage, although he praiſed his intended bride very highly, gave me to underſtand that the unfortunate victim of intereſt would not have any great reaſon to be pleaſed with her huſband: I could not help pitying her ſituation; and from that impuſe which naturally ariſes from compaſſion, I was induced to aſk her name;—her name, returned the officer, was Bellmore, but it is now Conyers.—What! Charlotte Bellmore?

Bellmore? cried I, with a mixture of ſurpiſe and indignation. The very ſame, replied he; but why this aſtoniſhment? pray have you any intereſt in the lady?—Sufficient, anſwered I, to prevent her from falling a ſacrifice to a man who ſo little deſerves her—a coxcomb who is too fond of himſelf, to place a juſt value on ſo ineſtimable a treaſure. Who are you, Sir, that dare to employ ſuch language to a gentleman? —I am her friend,—and you muſt either renounce all pretenſions to her this inſtant, or one of us muſt loſe his life. As you pleaſe, Sir, replied the officer, coolly; you have piſtols, I preſume, therefore we will walk to a proper place as ſoon a you will. I made no anſwer, but took up my piſtols, which lay on the table; he did the ſame, and we walked to a field

field at ſome diſtance from the houſe. I was impatient to reach the ſpot that muſt rid Charlotte of a man whoſe addreſſes, my heart flattered me, could not but be odious to her, or elſe by depriving me of life, ſpare me the mortification of ſeeing her poſſeſſed by one who appeared ſo truly unworthy. This thought fired my brain, and a ſmall gravel-pit preſenting itſelf to my view at the inſtant, I propoſed to my adverſary to cock our piſtols, jump into it at the ſame time, and fire as we could; he readily accepted the propoſal.—In jumping into the pit, my foot ſlipped, I fell on my face, and the piſtol went off on the ground.—My generous adverſary ſcorning to take advantage of an accident, refuſed to fire; we then placed ourſelves back to back, as the pit was too ſmall to admit of retiring

tiring to greater diſtance than three yards from each other—we turned at the ſame moment. The extreme impatience and agitation of my mind made me fire too ſoon, and the ball went into the ſide of the pit. The officer then clapped his piſtol to my breaſt.—Fire, ſaid I; my life is fairly yours.—No, ſaid he, I will not take away a life that muſt be ſo juſtly dear to Miſs Conyers.—Your haſty reſentment—your ſudden guſt of paſſion—your impatience, all convince me you can be no other than the unhappy Captain Conyers, the unfortunate brother of my adorable Charlotte.—How quickly does a ſingle act of generoſity in the hour of ſerioufneſs, change our opinions! —Alas! ſaid I, your liberality does but add to my misfortunes.—My ſiſter cannot refrain from beſtowing

her affections on a man of your ſentiments—You are both deſtined to be happy in the poſſeſſion of each other. That infidelity and caprice which appeared in your converſation, muſt be foreign from a heart in which ſincerity and honour are root-by nature—Generoſity and perfidy are incompatible.—But how can I acquaint my ſiſter with the obligations you have impoſed on us both? How repay them? By granting me your friendſhip, ſaid Sir Charles Felton.—Deign to accept mine, offering me his hand.—I give you my word of honour, that I will not marry your ſiſter till you and I ſhall have paſſed a year together; in that time, if I ſhall be happy enough to merit her hand, and ſhe will condeſcend to accept mine, I flatter myſelf you will not oppoſe our mutual happineſs.—

 I heartily

I heartily accepted his friendſhip and his propoſals—we returned to the inn, and having ordered our horſes, proceeded to town. I inſiſted on Sir Charles accompanying me home. On our arrival nothing could exceed their ſurprize and joy, at ſeeing us together. My father's ſatisfaction was at the higheſt pitch, as he now hoped to ſee happineſs ſpeedily reſtored to every branch of his family. But his joy was ſoon converted into grief. Misfortune had not yet exhauſted her well-ſtocked quiver.—The moſt fatal arrow was reſerved for the laſt. When the tender careſſes of nature were over, I reſolved to ſatisfy my gratitude, by relating the circumſtances of the duel. To render the account more ſtriking, in deſcribing the action of Sir Charles, at the moment he preſented his piſtol

to

to my breaſt, I had taken up one of the travelling piſtols which the ſervants had brought into the room, and clapping it to the breaſt of Sir Charles; inſtead of firing, ſaid I, his generous ſoul—Before I could finiſh the ſentence—the piſtol, which had not been uncocked, went off, and laid the unfortunate baronet at my feet. I cannot reflect on that moment—the moſt painful of my life—without ſhuddering—the fatal ſcene preſents itſelf to my mind in ſuch horrid colours, as deprive me of the power to recite it.

Stricken with horror, I exclaimed, what cruel fate continues to perſecute us! what inviſible hand leads us blindly on to criminality! My unhappy father, thinking to revenge his injured honour and puniſh a perfidious wife—plunges a dagger into the breaſt

of innocence.—The mild virtues of pity and compaſſion light in my heart the flame of inceſt.—Warmed by gratitude I am anxious, by a faithful recital, to do juſtice to the noble mind of a friend; and, while eager to render more ſtriking the generous action that preſerved my own exiſtence, my guilty hand terminates his. O God! unfathomable are the depths of thy eternal decrees! but grant me an extraordinary effort of courage to enable me to ſupport ſo extraordinary a portion of misfortune.

The ſervants had carried the wounded baronet to a bed, and the ſurgeons having been ſent for, and arrived, dreſſed the wound, which they pronounced to be mortal. Sir Charles deſired to ſee me. The horrors of death, which were viſible in his

his countenance, turned my blood cold. Why did not you come ſooner, ſaid he, with a dying voice; fearful of leaving you without a parting word, I have longed for your preſence. You muſt be perſuaded that I impute my wound to mere accident —I reſpect the hand that was choſen to be the inſtrument of heaven;— Alas! I do more—I eſteem it. Every body was in tears.—I watered with mine, the hand he had ſtretched out to me.

After breathing a while.—" I only regret," ſaid he, " that the happineſs of Charlotte, which it ſhould have been the ſtudy of my life to promote—and the conſolation of dying your brother.—" Theſe laſt words inſpired me with an idea which I thought might probably comfort his laſt moments;—an idea which doubt-

leſs proceeded from heaven, as it was the ſource of that happineſs I now enjoy.

It is yet poſſible, ſaid I to Sir Charles, to give you that ſatisfaction you ſeem ſo earneſtly to deſire—yes, my brother; you may ſtill receive a legal claim to that title, ſince it appears dear to you.—I am convinced my ſiſter will conſent—and her mother, as well as my father and myſelf, eagerly deſire the honour of your alliance: you have only to repoſe yourſelf, and not to exhauſt your ſtrength by talking; I will go with my father to obtain a ſpecial licence, and the ceremony may be performed at our return. We then left the room: I took the ſurgeon aſide, and aſked him how long he though it probable Sir Charles might live; he ſaid, perhaps eight and forty hours:

but

but it is not unlikely he may expire in the night.

My father immediately drove to the archbiſhop's palace, and luckily found him at home. On repreſenting the matter to him, he was kind enough to grant us the licence inſtantly; we called on a clergyman who lived in the neighbourhood, and took him home with us in the carriage, to perform the ceremony. We all proceeded to the chamber in which Sir Charles was lying.—Charlotte was half dead—a ghaſtly paleneſs covered both their faces—they looked more like two inanimate bodies, whoſe funeral rites were preparing, than a young couple at the ſhrine of wedlock. Inſtead of ſongs of mirth and feſtive garlands, our ears were ſaluted with groans—our

eyes ſwam with tears—the torches of Death and Hymen were the ſame.

Every one repreſſed their ſighs within their boſom; a profound ſilence reigned throughout the room. Sir Charles fixed his dying eyes on Charlotte, who, overwhelmed with grief, was ſupported by her mother. The clergyman judged there was no time to be loſt. He began the ceremony, and having come to that part when he aſked Sir Charles—whether he would take her for his lawful wife, he collected his whole force to pronounce the important yes, as loud as poſſible; a plaintive ſigh, which ſeemed at that moment to proceed from the bottom of his heart, was the laſt of his life.

We were all involved in the deepeſt affliction when the moſt extraordinary

nary event attracted our attention to another object. Charlotte had fainted, and we were buſied in attempting to reſtore her to herſelf, when the clergyman, whoſe whole attention had been hitherto engroſſed by Sir Charles Felton, advanced to offer his aſſiſtance in recovering my ſiſter, and brought the candle from the bedſide to that part of the room in which her mother and myſelf were ſupporting her in our arms. He ſtopped ſuddenly, as if ſtruck with aſtoniſhment, and fixing his eyes on Charlotte and her mother, whoſe faces he had not before taken notice of, exclaimed, "Do my eyes deceive me, or is it Mrs. Bellmour and her daughter that I ſee!" Charlotte, who had juſt recovered her ſenſes as he uttered this exclamation, fixed her eyes on him in her turn, and exclaimed, Mr. Smith, is it you?

—My father and myſelf were at a loſs to comprehend the meaning of theſe mutual exclamations. Mrs. Bellmour immediately recollecting the features and voice of the clergyman, knew him to be the perſon to whom ſhe had entruſted the care of her daughter, during her abſence from England, and whoſe attention to her we had frequently heard her ſo highly extol. Charlotte embraced the worthy man with the moſt cordial affection, calling him her father —a name by which ſhe had been always uſed to addreſs him in the days of her infancy, when ſhe knew not that ſhe had a father.—Yes, my deareſt daughter, if your heart prompts you to beſtow on me a name ſo dear, from motives of tenderneſs and gratitude—nature and truth confirm your choice.—Let us

retire

retire from this ſcene of death, and I will explain a myſtery that is now as obſcure as aſtoniſhing. We accordingly went to the drawing room, where, when we were all ſeated, Mr. Smith addreſſed Mrs. Bellmour as follows.

"You doubtleſs remember, Madam, that when you left your daughter with us, we had a girl whom we had alſo chriſtened Charlotte.—There was that ſtrong reſemblance in their features, which is ſo frequently viſible in infants of the ſame age.—Scarce a month after your departure from England, your child was taken ill; we ſoon diſcovered her illneſs to be a violent fever, which, in ten days baffled the ſkill of the faculty, and put an end to her exiſtence. It was then we firſt conceived the plan of ſubſtituting our own child in her place,

place, which we thought might be done without a poſſibility of diſcovering the fraud; as we underſtood, from the perſon who paid us every quarter for your daughter's board, that it was probable you would not return to England for many years. All the ſums you remitted were faithfully applied to her education; and we were highly flattered at the progreſs ſhe made.—Heaven ſeemed however to frown on the deception;—we ſoon after experienced a loſs that envolved us in diſtreſs, and which was followed by a regular train of misfortunes that did not end till the anxiety they had cauſed had brought my wife to the grave. I then found myſelf in a worſe ſituation than before; as my wife, who was a widow when I married her, had a trifling jointure,

which, at her death, went of courſe to the next heir. In this dilemma, I applied to an old college friend, who had a very good living in Cumberland. He adviſed me to take orders, and immediately gave me a title, his own curacy being then vacant. He furniſhed me with a trifling ſum of money, introduced me himſelf to the biſhop, with whom he was intimate, and at the next ordination I was ordained, and went directly to take poſſeſſion of my curacy, about three miles beyond Kendal. On leaving town I waited on Charlotte's governeſs at Kenſington, and agreed with her to take her totally under her own care, till your arrival, for which purpoſe I directed your remittances to be paid in future into her hands. My ſtay was about two years at my curacy, when my friend

the

the rector dying, another person was presented to the living, who determined on residing constantly, and doing the duty himself. I cannot say that I much regretted the loss of my curacy, as I had long been anxious to see my daughter, and my situation and circumstances rendered it impossible for me to take so long journey. I now resolved on coming to town. The moment of my arrival I flew to Kensington, and was informed by the governess that you had been there some months before; and after making yourself known, had taken away your daughter. I soon got a curacy in this neighbourhood, and have been ever since busily employed in vain attempts to discover your residence. When I first came into the room, Charlotte's face struck me, but as there was only a glimmering

ing light, I could not diſtinguiſh it well enough to recollect her; beſides, when I was told that ſhe was the bride, and her name was Conyers, I could not have the leaſt idea that ſhe was the daughter I had been ſo long in ſearch of." When he finiſhed ſpeaking, Charlotte threw her arms round his neck, and wept in his boſom. Her father returned her careſſes with the utmoſt warmth.—My mother-in-law informed Mr. Smith of the circumſtance that had occaſioned the change of name, and he congratulated her on it with the moſt cordial ſincerity.

During his ſtory my blood ſeemed to flow more freely through my veins; my heart was eaſed of a dreadful load which had ſo long oppreſſed it; Hope's benignant rays had pierced the diſmal gloom of ſorrow; its ſad impreſ-

ſions

ſions were effaced, and ſcarcely any other trace of them remained, than a gentle langour, better adapted to excite ſenſibility than to promote affliction. The ſatisfaction which my ſoul experienced, quickly ruſhed into that of Charlotte's.—I have already ſaid, our ſentiments were ever congenial.

Our looks, which met each other, aſſured us of the diſpoſition of our hearts—our happineſs ſoon became general.—Charlotte's father found a much-loved child—mine was delighted at the idea of making happy a ſon on whom he doated—Mrs. Bellmour alone loſt a daughter ſhe adored; but the ties of nature were incapable of ſtrengthening thoſe of tenderneſs and friendſhip, by which ſhe was ſo firmly attached to Charlotte. The only delay to our felicity was that which

decency

decency required, from reſpect to the memory of the brave and unfortunate Sir Charles Felton.

Charlotte's father gladly conſented to our union, and ſealed his conſent by performing the ceremony himſelf. Our happineſs ſeemed to be communicated to our friends. The bleſſed day was celebrated—not with pomp—but extacy.—The mind, long aſſailed by the rude ſtorms of misfortune, is dazzled, as it were, by the ſun-ſhine of joy.—Strengthened by the contraſt, its bliſs is ſublimed to delirium.

My father, his wife, Mr. Smith, my aunt—we all live in the moſt perfect harmony of friendſhip and eſteem;—tranquil and happy, we have conſigned our misfortunes to oblivion—Or if they ſometimes occur to my mind,

it

it is but to remind me that my keeneſt ſufferings are amply repaid, by the poſſeſſion of my Charlotte.

FINIS.

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